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ABSTRACT

This curriculum project, a lesson plan for a thematic literary study of war and its effects, has five goals: (1) to have students read various selections of literature on the theme of war from both the Middle East and the West; (2) to teach students to analyze the differences and similarities between wars fought in the Middle East as compared to the West; (3) to generate literary discussions and written essays analyzing the similarities and disparities of Middle Eastern versus Western wars; (4) to generate discussion and written essays analyzing the similarities and differences on a designated aspect of war; and (5) to review and/or teach the various literary elements and literary techniques employed in well-written literature. The project includes 18 pieces of literature (poetry and prose), multiple choice questions for each selection (and a teacher answer key), and discussion questions. Contains 24 references. (BT)

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ED 451 116

Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar 2000 Curriculum Project
"Egypt and Israel: Between Tradition and Modernity"

A Thematic Literary Approach to War and Its Effects --

A Comparison/Contrast of Middle-Eastern Literature

As Compared to Western Literature

SO 032 632

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A Thematic Literary Approach to War and Its Effects –

A Comparison/Contrast of Middle-Eastern Literature

As Compared to Western Literature

General Overview of the Project:

War is, and always has been, a universal threat to mankind with disastrous consequences. Despite race, creed, gender, age, national origin, or family background, the effects of these wars throughout history have destroyed not only the soldiers who fought in them and the lands they were fought upon, but also the survivors and families left behind. The damages of these conflicts range from the physical to the psychological, from immediate to the long range, and from the intimately personal to the universally symbolic.

In order to write this project, I was limited by the time I was allotted to finish the paper, the number of books I was able to purchase and carry from Egypt and Israel, and how much I could read and analyze within this time framework. I apologize that it is not as complete as the perfectionist in me would have liked; however, I intend to make additional contributions to the Middle-Eastern and Western literature collection in the near future.

I sincerely appreciate the honor and opportunity that was afforded me with the Fulbright-Hays Scholarship. I hope my curriculum project reflects this gratitude.

Respectfully yours,

Christina F. M. Zawierucha

A Thematic Literary Approach to War and Its Effects –

A Comparison/Contrast of Middle-Eastern Literature

As Compared to Western Literature

by Christina F. M. Zawierucha

Lesson Plan Goals:

To have students read various selections of literature on the theme of war from both the Middle East and the West

To teach students to analyze the differences and similarities between wars fought in the Middle East as compared to the West

Using the unit in its entirety, to generate literary discussions and written essays analyzing the similarities and disparities of Middle-Eastern versus Western wars in regard to causes, effects, nature of the conflict, tone, etc.

Using the unit as selected paired pieces of literature, to generate discussion and written essays analyzing the similarities and differences on a designated aspect of war: on soldiers, veterans, family, children, environment, religion, etc.

To review and/or teach the various literary elements and literary techniques employed in well-written piece of published literature

Lesson Plan Objectives:

Students will be able to read, take notes, answer multiple-choice questions, and write a well-organized, coherent literary essay on the similarities and differences of war.

Students will be able to analyze, interpret, and evaluate ideas and information from a wide variety of literary pieces on different aspects of war in the Middle East as well as the West.

Students will be able to establish and narrow the controlling idea as revealed in the selected pieces of literature

Students will be able to use relevant evidence from the pieces of literature to critically analyze how an author employs literary elements and techniques to convey ideas.

Lesson Plan Materials:

Eighteen pieces of literature from the Middle East and the West on the topic of war

Eighteen sets of multiple-choice questions that accompany each selection

Teacher answer key for multiple-choice questions

Lists of Middle-Eastern and Western literature

List of poetry and prose collections

List of paralleled pieces of literature on various aspects pertaining to war

Questions for discussion that accompany the thematic approach to war

Information on Reading and Writing for Literary Response - the "Controlling Idea" Essay

The "Skeleton Outline" for the "Controlling Idea" Essay

Notebook, writing paper, and pen

Reading and Writing for Literary Response

The "Controlling Idea" Essay

This essay tests a student's ability to understand and analyze two literary selections and write a unified essay about them. The teacher may also choose to have students explain how the author's use of literary elements and literary techniques enhance the piece and support the controlling idea.

The controlling idea that is established should relate directly to the theme or topic shared by the two selections. However, the controlling idea needs to be more specific and more sharply focused than the topic or theme. For example, two selections may both deal with this topic: "the effects of war on soldiers/people/a country. The narrowed controlling idea for the essay, however, might be: "the effects of war on soldiers is oftentimes much more devastating after the war than during the war" or "the effects of war on soldiers cause emotional and mental stress that scar the minds of the brave soldiers who fought to defend their country" or "the elements and the environments surrounding a soldier are greater foes than the opposing army" or "war can compel soldiers to develop an essential sense of unity."

The multiple-choice questions provide some additional insight into the two selections. For example, mention of a certain literary element or technique may provide a hint to a deeper level of interpretation.

The literary elements include characterization, setting, theme, point of view, tone, mood, structure, and plot.

The literary elements include symbolism, allegory, irony, rhetorical question, repetition, satire, flashback, foreshadowing, imagery, figurative language, and figures of speech (alliteration, simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, oxymoron, and onomatopoeia).

Notes should be taken by students as they read the selections. The notes should focus on three things: (1) important ideas in the selections, especially ideas that relate directly to the theme/topic; (2) literary elements and techniques that the authors use to convey their ideas; and (3) thematic similarities and differences between the selections.

Generally, it is easier to write about one selection at a time, analyzing that selection in detail before moving on to the other selection. Similarly, it is usually easiest to focus on one literary element or technique at a time.

Quotations can be one of the most effective ways to support and develop a controlling idea and discuss the elements and techniques.

To summarize, this literary essay has three components: (1) to read two literary selections and take notes; (2) to answer multiple-choice questions about each selection; and (3) to write a unified and cohesive essay about the two selections. (Stern 171-233)

"Skeleton" Outline for the "Controlling Idea" Essay

Directions:

Read the following passages entitled _____ and _____. Answer the multiple-choice questions. Then write the essay as described in "Your Task."

Your Task:

After you have read the pieces of literature and answered the multiple-choice questions, write a unified essay about _____, as revealed in the passages. In your essay, use evidence from both pieces to establish a narrowed controlling idea: _____, use evidence from both passages to develop your narrowed controlling idea, and show how each author uses specific literary elements and/or techniques to convey ideas.

Guidelines:

- ~ Use ideas form both passage to develop a narrowed controlling idea about _____ as revealed in the passages.
- ~ Use specific and relevant evidence from both passages to develop your controlling idea.
- ~ Show how each author uses specific literary elements or literary techniques to convey ideas.
- ~ Organize your ideas in a logical and coherent manner.
- ~ Follow the conventions of standard written English.

***** **This models the Task 3 "Controlling Idea" Essay from the New York State Comprehensive Examination in English according to the new Standards.**

Middle-Eastern Literature

From: "After the Apocalypse"
by Samih al-Qasim

"At the Outset of the Day"
by S/ Y. Agnon

"Aunt Latifa"
by Emily Nasrallah

"In Loving Memory of Khubayb"
by Hassan Ibn Thabit

"The Martyr"
by Ibrahim Tuqan

"A Meeting of Veterans of the Palmach in 1978 in Maayan Harod"
by Yehuda Amachai

"The Sapling of Peace"
by Ada Aharoni

"Secrets"
by Ahmad 'Abd al-Mu'ti Hijazi

"Since Then"
by Yehuda Amichai

"This Cursed War"
by an Israeli Soldier

Western Literature

"Armistice Day"
by Zelma Dunning Bowen

"Exposure"
by Wilfred Owen

"The Medal"
by Taufiq Rafat

"The Next War"
by Osbert Sitwell

"A Paper Soldier"
by Bulat Okudzhava

"The Seed"
by Hal Summers

"The Sniper"
by Liam O'Flaherty

From: *The Things They Carried*
by Tim O'Brien

Poetry Collection

From: "After the Apocalypse"
by Samih al-Qasim

"Armistice Day"
by Zelma Dunning Bowen

"Exposure"
by Wilfred Owen

"In Loving Memory of Khubayb"
by Hassan Ibn Thabit

"The Martyr"
by Ibrahim Tuqan

"The Medal"
by Tuafiq Rafat

"A Meeting of Veterans of the Palmach in 1978 in Maaya Harod"
by Yehuda Amichai

"The Next War"
by Osbert Sitwell

"A Paper Soldier"
by Bulat Okudzkava

"The Sapling of Peace"
by Ada Aharoni

"Secrets"
by Ahmad 'Abd al-Mu'ti Hijazi

"The Seed"
by Hal Summer

"Since Then"
by Yehuda Amachai

"This Cursed War"
by an Israeli Soldier

Prose Collection

"At the Outset of the Day
by S. Y. Agnon

"Aunt Latifa"
by Emily Nasrallah

"The Sniper"
by Liam O'Flaherty

From: *The Things They Carried*
by Tim O'Brien

Parallel Literary Pieces for Comparison/Contrast Analysis

dealing with symbolism:

"Onset of the Day" - "The Sniper"

dealing with Jewish symbolism:

"Onset of the Day" - "Since Then"

dealing with bitterness and despair:

"Aunt Latifa" - "After the Apocalypse"

dealing with remembrance/family:

"Since Then" - "The Medal"

dealing with veterans:

"A Meeting of Veterans..." - "Secrets"

"A Meeting of Veterans..." - "The Next War"

dealing with God/religion:

"In Loving Memory..." - "Armistice Day"

"Onset of the Day" - "In Loving Memory..."

dealing with peace/hope:

"The Sapling of Peace" - "The Seed"

dealing with fearless loyalty/courage:

"The Martyr" - "The Sniper"

"The Martyr" - "In Loving Memory..."

dealing with the environment:

"Exposure" - *Things They Carried*

Parallel Literary Pieces (continued)

dealing with children:

"After the Apocalypse"	-	"The Next War"
"After the Apocalypse"	-	"The Seed"

dealing with civil war:

"The Sniper"	-	"Aunt Latifa"

dealing with pawns of war:

"This Cursed War"	-	"A Paper Soldier"

dealing with destruction:

"After the Apocalypse"	-	"The Seed"
"After the Apocalypse"	-	"Exposure"

Middle-Eastern Literature

From: "After the Apocalypse" by Samih al-Qasim

"At the Outset of the Day" by S/ Y. Agnon

"Aunt Latifa" by Emily Nasrallah

"In Loving Memory of Khubayb" by Hassan Ibn Thabit

"The Martyr" by Ibrahim Tuqan

"A Meeting of Veterans of the Palmach in 1978 in Maayan Harod" by Yehuda Amachai

"The Sapling of Peace" by Ada Aharoni

"Secrets" by Ahmad 'Abd al-Mu'ti Hijazi

"Since Then" by Yehuda Amichai

"This Cursed War" by an Israeli Soldier

From: After the Apocalypse

Samih al-Qasim

I feel my limbs,
but cannot find them.
I implore my sense of sight,
but see nothing beyond a neutral grey.
Suddenly, warm radiates through the sand
crowding my spirit.
I discover my hands and legs,
there they are, familiar limbs,
assembling themselves into a heap of sand!
My body sees me.
Here I am, creating myself in my own image.
Here I am, the first human on another planet called:
Dayr Yasin,

One could say then that humanity
reconsiders itself,
reconsiders the laws, and the laws of the laws,
takes phenomena seriously,
in anticipation of what surprises the future holds
in the galaxy's enchanted whirl,
orbited by earthly satellites
gushing from wombs of volcanoes
to be grabbed immediately
by space scientists
who blessed them with the loveliest names:
Lidice
Kufr Qasim
Sabra, Shatila,
My Lai.
One cannot help being astonished
at the breakdown of norms and mores,
at the simultaneous fall of all equations,
let alone fig trees, bonds, travel tickets, house arrests,
school and marriage certificates,
let alone global conventions: the Third World,
European Common Market, the Stock Market,
Alignment and Nonalignment, Nuclear Weapons, Disarmament,
and documents of death,

Come with me, bedouin girl,
you who have not yet spoken,
come, let's give names to new things,
they may give us back our own names in return.
In my name you rise from the dead.
In your name I make death acceptable,
a familiar morning greeting,
a bending over the neighbor's fence
to pluck a little rose for a tired lapel.
O virgin bedouin girl, with lips open,
but silent, you see everything
through the transparent wall of Apocalypse,
you bear on your shoulders the burden everything:
storms, blood-stained hands, children's lips
still clutching their mother's severed breast,
everything: trees twisted in the mud,
tall blackened buildings, broken windows,
charred skeletons sitting cross-legged
cigarette in hand, watching the TV set
continue its broadcast (live under the rubble)
of the emergency session
of the United Nations . . . etc. etc.

You see through the transparent wall
of Apocalypse sound mufflers on secret guns,
nickel handcuffs, police billy clubs, tanks,
tear gas bombs, demonstrations, burning car tires,
and bullets fired into the air,
apologizing to angels,
making their ways straight
to the school girls' breasts.

At this, international agencies would hurry
to quiet reactions and rumors
while the doleful, angry chorus
exercises its absolute freedom
in the biggest armed robbery
in history.

The present is an innocent lie.
To see the future we must consult the past -
a past ever-present before our eyes,
a mammoth octopus.

O virgin desert!
Here we are, sent by the heart and mind
on an official mission

to build the world anew.
To prepare it once again
for another Apocalypse!

Tree trunk against tree trunk,
stone next to stone,
thus the relationship takes form.
We begin from here
though doubts sometimes assail us.
Sometimes we'll miss one another,
but we won't be afraid to look behind.

Later,
new children will be born,
they'll ask their fathers sternly:
Why? For whom? When and how?
There won't be anyone to answer

except the ground waters singing:
I am grief! I announce my innocence!
I am desire! I enforce my authority!
I am love! I spread my sails on land
and scatter my seeds in the furrows of the sea.
I am hate! Your fire, your sacred fire!

Nothing remains the same.
In the long run, motion asserts itself,
erects new rules over the pure sands
now subject to factories' oil,
fires, the vomit of the sick,
and the wretched human din.

But after all this
there must be some recompense
for the children are about to go to school.
So let the storms subside a little
and the darkness lift itself off part of the road
for their sakes, for their sakes only,
for the sake of the children
going to school
after the Apocalypse! (381-384)

Translated by Sharif Elmusa and Naomi Shihab Nye

From: After the Apocalypse - Definitions and Explanations

- *Dayr Yasin*: a village near Jerusalem whose population was massacred by the Irgun terrorist faction led by Menachem Begin. The tragedy took place on April 9, 1948, and was meant to terrorize the Arab population in other parts of the country.

- *Kufr Qasim*: a massacre committed by Israeli soldiers in 1956 against the inhabitants of the village of Kufr Qasim. While the villagers were out in the fields, the Israeli authorities imposed a curfew. The soldiers stationed around the village shot returning villagers even though they were aware that they could not have known of the curfew.

- *Sabra and Shatila*: two Palestine refugee camps in West Beirut which were attacked by Phalangist forces in September 1982, during the Israeli occupation of the city. Numerous civilians were slaughtered in cold blood, and many whole families were wiped out. The two camps have become symbols of atrocity.

- *My Lai*: the massacre in the Vietnamese village of My Lai conducted by the America Lt. William Calley and his military unit on Vietnamese civilians and unarmed soldiers in 1969. The verdict of guilty was given against Calley. He subsequently lost an appeal and the case was closed. (384-385)

Samih al-Qasim (1939 -) Palestinian poet from Galilee. Born into a Druze family, he was educated in Rama and Nazareth and took up a teaching position in an Israeli public school, from which he was dismissed because of his political views. He has also been imprisoned and held under house arrest several times on account of his poetry and political commitment. By the age of thirty, al-Qasim had published six collections of poetry, widely read throughout the Arab villages of Galilee and eventually throughout the Arab world. His poetry deals mostly with Palestinian captivity and struggle. His current concern is to establish a Palestinian theater with a high artistic and intellectual mission. His most recent *diwans, The Dark Side of the Apple, the Bright Side of the Heart* (1981), *The Dimensions of the Spirit (*1983), and *Persona Non* Grata (1986), reflect his continuous experimentation with language and tone. (380)

"From: After the Apocalypse" –Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions. The questions may help you think about the ideas you might want to use in further discussions or in an essay.

1. "The present is an innocent lie… the past… a mammoth octopus." Which literary element is being exemplified here?

   a. metaphor
   b. symbol
   c. personification
   d. allusion

2. The tone employed in the lines "… by space scientists/ who bless them with/ the loveliest names: Lidice/ Kufr Qasim/ Sabra, Shatila,/ My Lai" is

   a. sadness
   b. sarcasm
   c. confusion
   d. foreboding

3. In the fifth stanza, the phrase "… the biggest armed robbery in history" means

   a. theft of the country's government
   b. the stealing of people's lives
   c. international agencies taking over
   d. the war between Palestine and Israel

4. According to the last line in verse ten, what is the seed of war?

   a. desire to enforce authority
   b. lust for the sacred fire
   c. thirst for power
   d. mankind's hate

5. What is the meaning of the word "recompense" in the second line of the last stanza: "But after all this/ there must be some recompense/ for the children are about to go to school"?

   a. compensation for damages and loss
   b. sympathy for losses during childhood
   c. remediation for schooling
   d. free education for children

6. The effect of war in this poem is on

   a. the virgin desert and pure sands
   b. the innocent civilians and children
   c. the innocent children
   d. the fighting soldiers

7. Which figures of speech are employed in the following last lines of the poem?
"So let the storms subside a little... for their sakes, for their sakes only, for the sake of the children going to school...!"

a. repetition and personification
b. repetition and alliteration
c. metaphor and irony
d. symbolism and personification

8. A bedouin girl is addressed twice in the middle of the poem: "Come with me, bedouin girl" and "O Virgin bedouin girl..."; however, she has already been killed in war. What literary technique is that called?

a. direct address
b. allusion
c. apostrophe
d. synecdoche

9. In the section of the poem from "O virgin bedouin girl with open lips...to the United Nations... etc. etc." what is being described?

a. gruesome imagery of war
b. conditions after a natural disaster
c. the next Apocalypse
d. all of the above

10. What could the "transparent wall of the Apocalypse" represent?

a. the lens of history
b. a photograph of tomorrow
c. the wall of war
d. two sides: war/peace

11. In what tone are the words "United Nations...etc. etc." spoken?

a. fear
b. condamnation
c. pleading
d. anger

12. The Palestinians are bracing for yet "another Apocalypse" yet they pray it never occurs for the sake of

a. humanity
b. "the wretched human din"
c. the children going to school
d. all of the above

At the Outset of the Day

S. Y. Agnon

After the enemy destroyed my home I took my little daughter[1] in my arms and fled with her to the city. Gripped with terror, I fled in frenzied haste a night and a day until I arrived at the courtyard of the Great Synagogue[2] one hour before nightfall on the eve of the Day of Atonement[3]. The hills and mountains that had accompanied us departed, and I and the child entered into the courtyard. From out of the depths rose the Great Synagogue, on its left the old house of study and directly opposite that, one doorway facing the other, the new house of study.

This was the house of prayer and these the houses of Torah[4] that I had kept in my mind's eye all my life. If I chanced to forget them during the day, they would stir themselves and come to me at night in my dreams, even as during my waking hours. Now that the enemy had destroyed my home, I and my little daughter sought refuge in these places; it seemed that my child recognized them, so often had she heard about them.

An aura of peace and rest suffused the courtyard. The Children of Israel had already finished the afternoon prayer and, having gone home, were sitting down to the last meal before the fast to prepare themselves for the morrow, that they might have strength and health enough to return in repentance.

A cool breeze swept through the courtyard, caressing the last of the heat in the thick walls, and a whitish mist spiraled up the steps of the house, the kind children call angels' breath.

I rid my mind of all that the enemy had done to us and reflected upon the Day of Atonement drawing ever closer, that holy festival comprised of love and affection, mercy and prayer, a day whereon men's supplications are dearer, more desired, more acceptable than at all other times. Would that they might appoint a reader of prayers worthy to stand before the ark, for recent generations have seen the decline of emissaries of the congregation who know how to pray; and cantors who reverence their throats with their trilling, but bore the heart, have increased. And I, I needed strengthening and, needless to say, my little daughter, a babe torn away from her home.

I glanced at her, at my little girl standing all atremble by the memorial candle[5] in the courtyard, warming her little hands over the flame. Growing aware of my eyes, she looked at me like a frightened child who finds her father standing behind her and sees that his thoughts are muddled and his heart humbled.

Grasping her hand in mine, I said, "Good men will come at once and give me a tallit[6] with an adornment of silver just like the one the enemy tore. You remember the lovely tallit that I used to spread over your head when the priests would rise up to bless the people. They will give me a large festival prayer book filled with prayers, too, and I will wrap myself in the tallit and take the book and pray to God, who saved us from the hand of the enemy who sought to destroy us.

"And what will they bring you, my dearest daughter? You my darling, they will bring a little prayer book full of letters, full

of all of the letters of the alphabet and the vowel marks, too. And now, dearest daughter, tell me, an *alef* and a *bet* that come together with a *kametz* beneath the *alef*—how do you say them?"

"*Av,*" my daughter answered.

"And what does it mean?" I asked.

"Father," my daughter answered, "like you're my father."

"Very nice, that's right, an *alef with* a *kametz* beneath and a *bet* with no dot in it make *av*."

"And now, my daughter," I continued, "what father is greater than all other fathers? Our Father in heaven, who is my father and your father and the father of the whole world. You see, my daughter, two little letters stand there in the prayer book as if they were all alone, then they come together and lo and behold they are *av*. And not only these letters but all letters, all of them join together to make words and words make prayers and the prayers rise up before our Father in heaven who listens very, very carefully, to all that we pray, if only our hearts cling to the upper light like a flame clings to a candle."

Even as I stood there speaking of the power of the letters, a breeze swept through the courtyard and pushed the memorial candle against my daughter. Fire seized hold of her dress. I ripped off the flaming garment, leaving the child naked, for what she was wearing was all that remained of her lovely clothes. We had fled in panic, destruction at our heels, and had taken nothing with us. Now that fire had consumed her dress, I had nothing with which to cover my daughter.

I turned this way and that, seeking anything my daughter could clothe herself with. I sought, but found nothing. Wherever I directed my eyes, I met emptiness. I'll go to the corner of the storeroom[7], I said to myself, where torn sacred books are hidden away, perhaps there I will find something. Many a time when I was a lad I had rummaged about there and found all sorts of things, sometimes the conclusion of a matter and sometimes its beginning or its middle. But now I turned there and found nothing with which to cover my little girl. Do not be surprised that I found nothing. When books were read, they were rent; but now that books are not read, they are not rent[8].

I stood there worried and distraught. What could I could I do for my daughter, what could I cover her nakedness with? Night was drawing on and with it the chill of the night, and I had no garment, nothing to wrap my daughter in. I recalled the home of Reb[9] Alter[10], who had gone up to the Land of Israel. I'll go to his sons and daughters, I decided, and ask clothing of them. I left my daughter as she was and headed the household of Reb Alter.

How pleasant to walk without being pursued. The earth is light and comfortable and does not burn beneath one's feet, nor do the heavens fling thorns into one's eyes. But I ran rather than walked, for, even if no man was pursuing me, time was: the sun was about to set and the hour to gather for the evening prayer was nigh. I hurried lest the members of Reb Alter's household might already be getting up to leave for the house of prayer.

It is comforting to remember the home of a dear friend in time of distress. Reb Alter, peace be with him, had circumcised me, and a covenant of love bound us together. As long as Reb Alter lived in his home I was a frequent visitor there, the more so in the early days when I was a classmate of his grandson Gad. Reb Alter's house was small, so small that one wondered how such a large man could live there. But Reb Alter was wise and made himself so little that his house seemed large.

The house, built on one of the low hills surrounding the Great Synagogue, had a stucco platform protruding from it. Reb Alter, peace be with him, had been in the

habit of sitting on that platform with his long pipe in his mouth, sending wreaths of smoke gliding into space. Many a time I stood waiting for the pipe to go out so I could bring him a light. My grandfather, peace be with him, had given Reb Alter that pipe at my circumcision feast. "Your grandfather knows pipes very well," Reb Alter told me once, "and knows how to pick just the right pipe for every mouth."

Reb Alter stroked his beard as he spoke, like one well aware that he deserved that pipe, even though he was a modest man. His modesty showed itself one Friday afternoon before sunset. As he put out the pipe, and the Sabbath was approaching, he said, "Your grandfather never has to put out his pipe; he knows how to smoke more or less as time necessitates."

Well, then, I entered the home of Reb Alter and found his daughter, together with a small group of old men and old women, sitting near a window while an old man with a face like a wrinkled pear stood reading them a letter. All of them listened attentively, wiping their eyes. Because so many years had passed, I mistook Reb Alter's daughter for her mother. What's going on? I asked myself. On the eve of the Day of Atonement darkness is falling, and these people have not lit a "candle of life."[11] And what sort of letter is this? If from Reb Alter, he is already dead. Perhaps it was from his grandson, my friend Gad, perhaps news had come from Reb Alter's grandson Gad, who had frequented the house of study early and late. One day he left early and did not return.

It is said that two nights prior to his disappearance, his wet-nurse had seen him in a dream sprouting the plume of a peculiar bird from his head, a plume that shrieked, "A, B, C, D!" Reb Alter's daughter folded the letter and put it between the mirror and the wall. Her face, peeking out of the mirror, was the face of an aged woman bearing the burden of her years. And alongside her face appeared my own, green as a wound that has not formed a scab.

I turned away from the mirror and looked at the rest of the old people in Reb Alter's home and tried to say something to them. My lips flipped against each other like a man who wishes to say something but, upon seeing something bizarre, is seized with fright.

One of the old men noticed the state of panic I was in. Tapping one finger against his spectacles, he said, "You are looking at our torn clothing.[12] Enough that creatures like ourselves still have skin on our flesh." The rest of the old men and old women heard and nodded their heads in agreement. As they did so, their skin quivered. I took hold of myself, walked backward, and left.

I left in despair and, empty-handed, with no clothing, with nothing at all, returned to my daughter. I found her standing in a corner of the courtyard pressed against the wall next to the purification board[13] on which the dead are washed. Her hair was loose and wrapped about her. How great is Thy goodness, O God, in putting wisdom into the heart of such a little girl to enable her to wrap herself in her hair after her dress has burned off, for as long as she had not been given a garment it was good that she covered herself with her hair. But how great was the sadness that enveloped me at that moment, the outset of this holy festival whose joy has no parallel all the year. But now there was no joy and no sign of joy, only pain and anguish.

The stone steps sounded beneath feet clad in felt slippers and long stockings[14], as Jews bearing tallitot[15] and ritual gowns[16] streamed to the house of prayer. With my body I covered my little girl, trembling from the cold, and I stroked her hair. Again I looked in the storeroom where the torn pages from sacred books were kept, the room where in my youth I would find, among the

fragments, wondrous and amazing things. I remember one of the sayings, it went approximately like this: "At times she takes the form of an old woman and at times the form of a little girl.[17] And when she takes the form of a little girl, don't imagine that your soul is as pure as a little girl; this is but an indication that she passionately yearns to recapture the purity of her infancy when she was free of sin. The fool substitutes the *form* for the *need;* the wise man substitutes *will* for *need.*"[18]

A tall man with a red beard came along, picking from his teeth the last remnants of the final meal, pushing his wide belly out to make room for himself. He stood about like a man who knew that God would not run away and there was no need to hurry. He regarded us for a moment, ran his eyes over us, then said something with a double meaning.

My anger flowed into my hand, and I caught him by the beard and began yanking at his hair. Utterly astonished, he did not move. He had good cause to be astonished too: a small fellow like me lifting my hand against a brawny fellow like him. Even I was astonished: had he laid hold of me, he would not have let me go whole.

Another tall, husky fellow came along, one who boasted of being my dearest friend. I looked up at him, hoping that he would come between us. He took his spectacles, wiped them, and placed them on his nose. The whites of his eyes turned green and his spectacles shone like moist scales. He stood looking at us as though we were characters in an amusing play.

I raised my voice and shouted, "A fire has sprung up and has burned my daughter's dress, and here she stands shivering from the cold!" He nodded his head in my direction and once more wiped his spectacles. Again they shone like moist scales and flashed like green scum on water. Once more I shouted, "It's not enough that no one gives her any clothing, but they must abuse us, too!" The fellow nodded his head and repeated my words as though pleased by them. As he spoke he turned his eyes away from me so that they might not see me, and that he might imagine he had made up the story on his own. I was no longer angry with my enemy, being so gripped with fury at this man: though he had prided himself on being my friend, he was repeating all that had befallen me as though it were a tale of his own invention.

My daughter began crying. "Let's run away from here."

"What are you saying?" I answered. "Don't you see that night has fallen and that we have entered the holy day? And if we were to flee, where would we flee and where could we hide?"

Where could we hide? Our home lay in ruins and the enemies covered all the roads. And if by some miracle we escaped, could we depend upon miracles? And here were the two houses of study and the Great Synagogue in which I studied Torah and in which I prayed and here was the corner where they had hidden away sacred books worn with age. As a little boy I rummaged about here frequently, finding all sorts of things. I do not know why, on this particular day, we found nothing, but I remember that I once found something important about *need* and *form* and *will.* Were it not for the urgency of the day I would explain this matter to you thoroughly, and you would see that it is by no means allegorical but a simple and straightforward affair.

I glanced at my little girl who stood trembling from the cold, for she had been stripped of her clothing, she didn't even have a shirt, the night was chill, and the song of winter birds resounded from the mountains. I glanced at my daughter, the darling of my heart, like a father who glances at his little daughter, and a loving smile formed on my lips. This was a very timely smile, for it rid

her of her fear completely. I stood then with my daughter in the open courtyard of the Great Synagogue and the two houses of study which all my life stirred themselves and came to me in my dreams and now stood before me, fully real. The gates of the houses of prayer were open, and from all three issued the voices of the readers of prayer. In which direction should we look and whither should we bend our ears?

He who gives eyes to see with and ears to hear with directed my eyes and ears to the old house of study. The house of study was full of Jews, the doors of the ark were open, and the ark was full of old Torah scrolls, and among them gleamed a new scroll clothed in a red mantle with silver points. This was the scroll that I had written in memory[19] of the souls of days that had departed. A silver plate was hung over the scroll, with letters engraved upon it, shining letters. And even though I stood far off I saw what they were. A thick rope was stretched in front of the scroll that it might not slip and fall.

My soul fainted within me[20], and I stood and prayed as those wrapped in tallitot and ritual gowns. And even my little girl, who had dozed off, repeated in her sleep each and every prayer in sweet melodies no ear has ever heard.

I do not enlarge. I do not exaggerate. (370-377)

Translated by David S. Segal

S. Y. Agnon (1888-1970) was born in Buczacz, Poland, and moved to Jerusalem in 1924. Agnon received a traditional education, studying in the traditional one-room Jewish school, then privately with a teacher and with his father, learning the Bible, Talmud, and literature of the Haskalah (the Jewish Enlightenment.) In a somewhat nontraditional departure, Agnon studied German with a tutor and gained access to European literature in German translation. Destroyed in the Holocaust, his hometown of Buczacz retains in his imagination the accumulated richness of centuries of Jewish life in Eastern Europe. In 1907 Agnon left Buczacz for Palestine at the age of nineteen. During his first sojourn in Palestine, from 1907 to 1913, Agnon encountered the pioneer of the Secon Aliyah, who had come to work the land. While he never joined them in their physical labors, he came to know the land intimately over the years. From 1913 to 1924 Agnon lived in Germany, and these years constitute the writer's major European period. Living in Berlin and several other cities, Agnon absorbed a variety of cultural influences – secular and Jewish – that stayed with him. In 1920 he married Esther Marx, the daughter of a German-Jewish family prominent in Jewish scholarship and Zionist activities. Esther gave birth to a son and a daughter. In 1924, Agnon suffered a devastating loss when his home was destroyed in a fire that consumed all of his books, along with the manuscript of an unpublished autobiographical novel. The fire registered as one of the decisive losses in his life, and its impact can be felt throughout his work in themes of destruction and loss. Agnon moved back to Eretz Yisrael in 1924 and his family followed soon after; he resumed Orthodox ways. Agnon was to lose his home once again, and the historical resonance of this twice-repeated loss with the destruction of the Temple was significant to him.

The year 1929 saw widespread Arab uprisings against Jewish settlements, and Agnon suffered yet again the loss of his home and library. With the passing of years, he became the writer of Jerusalem. Awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1966, S. Y. Agnon is considered the towering genius of modern Hebrew literature for his hard-edged modernism and soft-hued imagery. Many storytellers have arisen to tell the story of East European Jewry, but the achievement of S. Y. Agnon remains singular. His canvas in wider, his erudition vaster, his humor wittier, his irony subtler. Above all , like any great writer, his art transcends the limits of its ostensible subject. Agnon's writing is inseparably entwined with the very particular culture of Polish Jewry and its continuation in the Land of Israel. At the same time, however, his art explores the universal questions that preoccupy great writing in all modern cultures: the fragmentary and fallen nature of human experience after the collapse of community and faith, and, as a counterbalance, the turn toward writing with its mythic possibilities and its linguistic and textual playfulness. (3-24)

"At the Outset of the Day" - Definitions and Explanations

- [1] *My little daughter*—The standard epithet for the soul in medieval Jewish philosophical writing.

- [2]*The Great Synagogue*—In the town of Buczacz where Agnon was born and spent his boyhood.

- [3]*The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)*—The solemn fast day that falls in the early autumn ten days after Rosh Hashanah. This is a day when Jews believe they need to do repentance and that they are judged for their deeds. Tradition says that on the Day of Atonement God seals The Book of Life and writes the names of those who shall live (or die) during the coming year.

- [4]*Torah*—The Five Books of Moses (the Pentateuch) written by a scribe in the form of a parchment scroll; the first book of the Jewish Bible; in a broader sense, the way of Jewish life and practice a ordained in the Bible and rabbinic sources.

- [5]*The memorial candle*—Memorial candles are lit on the eve of the Day of Atonement in memory of those who have died. In eastern Europe, because of the fear of fire at home, it was the custom to bring the candles to the synagogue and leave them in the lobby.

- [6]*Tallit (pl. tallitot)*—A shawl with ritually knotted fringes (tsitsit) worn by males during worship.

- [7]*The storeroom...where torn sacred books are hidden away*—The geniza, a room usually attached to a synagogue, where books and ritual objects containing the name of God would be preserved.

- [8]*When books were read, they were rent*—The translation here reproduces the wordplay in the Hebrew (*nikra'im*, meaning "read," and *nikra'im*, meaning "torn).

- [9]*Reb*—A title of respect for a man; the equivalent of "Mister" or "Master."

- [10]*Reb Alter had circumcised me, and a covenant of love bound us together*—Circumcision is considered the sign of the covenant through which the male child enters the Jewish community. Reb Alter appears elsewhere in Agnon's writing—in the novel *Temol Shilshom* (Only Yesterday), for example—as the mohel (ritual circumciser) and the keeper of the *pinkas*, the communal record of all those he has circumcised.

- [11]*Candle of Life*—or "memorial candle" is the traditional candle lit once a year on Yom Kippur in memory of those who had died; it burns for twenty-four hours.

- [12]*Torn clothing*—Clothing is sometimes torn on collar or lapel as symbol or mourning.

- [13]*Purification board*—This is a tradition that the Jewish dead must be washed and draped in shrouds for their funeral.

- [14]*Felt slippers and long stockings*—Jews often wear slippers or soft shoes on Yom Kippur; no leather is worn as if in mourning

- [15]*Tallitot*—The plural form of tallit.

- [16]*Ritual gowns*—This is a reference to the "kittel," the white garment that is worn by worshippers in the Ashkenazi tradition during the prayer service of the High Holidays.

- [17]*"At times she takes the form of an old woman"*—The identity of "she" here is not specified. We may read it as a further reference to the soul as a feminine image.

- [18]*The fool substitutes the form for the need; the wise man substitutes will for need*—The Hebrew plays on the guttural assonance of the nouns *tsurah* (form), *tsorekh* (need), and *ratson* (will).

- [19]*Scroll...in memory*—The narrator here identifies himself as a scribe who has written a scroll in memory of the souls of days that had departed. This may be interpreted as a rather solipsistic reference on Agnon's part to his own body of work written in memory of the past.

- [20]*My soul fainted within me*—The verb *nit'atfah*, translated here as "fainted," also means "covered itself." The sentence thus also reads: "My soul covered itself," with *nefesh* as the feminine noun for soul. (423-424)

"At the Outset of the Day" – Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions. The questions may help you think about the ideas you might want to use in further discussions or in an essay.

1. In the opening sentence as well as in the first two paragraphs of Agnon's short story, the reader learns that the protagonist and his daughter are facing the conflict of

   a. man vs. man
   b. man vs. society
   c. man vs. himself
   d. man vs. God

2. The Jewish symbol of "my little daughter" representing the soul of the father then places the protagonist in the conflict of

   a. man vs. man
   b. man vs. society
   c. man vs. himself
   d. man vs. God

3. Paragraph two says: "Now that the enemy had destroyed my home, I and my little daughter sought refuge in these places; it seemed that my child recognized them, so often had she heard about them." What/where are the "places of refuge" spoken about?

   a. his dreams
   b. the synagogues
   c. the courtyards
   d. other families' homes

4. "An aura of peace and rest suffused the courtyard." The meaning of the word "suffused" in the third paragraph is

   a. ruffled through
   b. disturbed
   c. spread through
   d. surrounded

5. What is the predominating figure of speech in the sentence: "A cool breeze swept through the courtyard, caressing the last of the heat in the thick walls, and a whitish mist spiraled up the steps of the house, the kind children call angels' breath."

   a. personification
   b. symbolism
   c. simile
   d. metaphor

6. "Fire seized hold of her dress. I ripped off the garment, leaving the child naked, for what she was wearing was all that remained of her lovely clothes." An interpretation of these words could be

   a. The father ripped off the burning dress to prevent his daughter's flesh from burning.
   b. After the war, the man has lost everything, even threatening the loss of his religion.
   c. The war has taken this man's home, his hopes, and possibly his soul.
   d. Both b and c

7. Continuing with the symbolism of this Jewish story, why did the father go to Reb Alter's home on the eve of the Day of Atonement?

   a. to find comfort with people he knew
   b. to find clothing for his daughter who stood shivering in the courtyard covered only with her hair
   c. to find a remnant of his religiously youthful past that might bring him back his soul, his faith
   d. to grieve with Reb Alter's family for their loss

8. "I left my daughter as she was and headed for the household of Reb Alter. How pleasant to walk without being pursued." What may have pursued him?

   a. the enemy who attacked his home/homeland
   b. his daughter because she was naked and cold
   c. his conscience, his soul, his wavering religion
   d. both a and c

9. Before entering Reb Alter's house, there are three paragraphs where the protagonist reminisces his childhood with Reb Alter. This literary device is called

   a. allusion
   b. flashback
   c. foreshadowing
   d. symbolism

10. "Her face (Reb Alter's daughter), peeking out of the mirror, was the face of an aged woman bearing the burden of her years. And alongside her face appeared my own, green as a wound that has not formed a scab." The sentence contains the literary technique called

   a. metaphor
   b. simile
   c. personification
   d. hyperbole

11. "You are looking at our torn clothing. Enough that creatures like ourselves still have skin on our flesh." What is the meaning of these words?

   a. The torn clothing represents the grieving family's religious ritual.
   b. He realizes the war has left them with little or nothing (clothes) to spare.
   c. The family does not have enough of their own religious foundation to support his religious weakness.
   d. both a and b

12. Which lines best confirm that the father has regained his soul, his religious faith?

   a. "With my body I covered my little girl, trembling from the cold, and I stoked her hair. Again I looked in the storeroom where the torn pages from sacred books were kept, the room where in my youth I would find, among the fragments, wondrous and amazing things."
   b. "I glanced at my daughter, the darling of my heart, like a father who glances at his little daughter, and a loving smile formed on my lips. This was a very timely smile, for it rid her of her fear completely."
   c. "My soul fainted within me, and I stood and prayed as those wrapped in tallitot and ritual gowns. And even my little girl, who had dozed off, repeated in her sleep each and every prayer in sweet melodies no ear has ever heard."
   d. all of the above

Aunt Latifa

Emily Nasrallah

I returned to the village to attend the funeral of Aunt Latifa, and that is why I had decided to keep my stay as brief as possible, especially as friendly relations between our two families had been severed for years. There remained nothing between us now but name and the memories, both sweet and bitter, left in the minds of relations, neighbours and busy-bodies.

But our personal assessment rarely conforms with that of society or matches the assessments of those who expect us to be there, expect us to pass down the street or stop at some alleyway so that they can grab hold of us and resume a dialogue that has been broken off for years...

This is exactly what happened to me with my arrival in Al Joura. I was met by small boys, the little devils, who were still racing around barefoot as they had when I left those homes a quarter of a century ago. They flocked around the car repeating the line, "Your Aunt Latifa has died, your Aunt Latifa has died..."

I looked beyond their small figures to the next group where men of all ages were scattered in the area which linked our modest home with the other houses of the alleys.

The accent of these people was different, and their incomprehensible chatter clamoured about me like heralds of thunder.

"May God compensate us with your safety.... comp...safe..."[1]

I crossed through this group and moved to push my way in among the lines of tightly packed women, where there was no room to take another step.

And here, among the women, expression let down its guard and a clear wailing rang out like the howling of winter storms in the depths of the valley.

"What do you have to say about Amma Latifa's death?"

Then the conversation digressed and was no longer directed at me, rather at the body laid out on the wrought iron bed.

"Get up, see who's come..."

Then the first voice came back to join the last in an unnerving chorus, and at that moment I had to decide what stand I would take to what was going on around me. Should I respond and give full vent to my feelings, allow tears to pour out freely, to quench the burning thirst of those eyes gathered in a circle around me? Or should I restrain myself and provoke gossiping whisperings and doubtful questions about the sincerity of my feelings?

I felt incapable of making a decision of such delicacy in such haste, so I flung myself into a chair that one of the women had vacated for me -- the guest from Beirut. As luck would have it the chair was opposite my Aunt's head, right before her face, the expression of which had not changed despite the terrible thinness that had come upon its owner, leaving her like a basket of bones wrapped in a shroud of skin.

I stayed put, neither moving nor uttering a word. My unmoving state was reflected in the group around me, and silence took hold of some minutes, after which one of the women remarked,

"Another refrain Sayyoud. A refrain worthy of our mistress Latifa." And Sayyoud

1

began to chant her songs of mourning, worn by time.

"Carry me and put me down a while... carry me to the doorway that I may sniff the breeze."

And the group followed in dreary voices. As for me, my head hung, my lips were pursed and my eyes turned to stone... Only my ears were open, taking in the lips' chanting that rang out in the air until it reached the ceiling, not to break out but to return and turn about the gaunt, waxen face. I felt that Amma Latifa, despite all the powerlessness that had stricken her, would almost have stood up to remonstrate against traditional words that did not become a death in which she had breached all tradition.

***

Amma Latifa's tragedy began with the outbreak of civil war in Al Joura whereby the people were split into two camps, or rather two warring parties, each forming a group around it to fight the other.

No family escaped this course of action, and naturally Amma Latifa and her family allied themselves with one of the two parties. By chance it was the stronger one, and it took up a violent war against the defending party, driving its young men to flee to the furthest corners of the world. None but the old, the very young and the women stayed behind in the village. And they carried on, obedient to the winning authority. Amma Latifa lived happy days. She never attempted to hide her feelings or to show humility, indeed she could not have behaved more differently. One of the women from the other party would only have to approach her home for Amma Latifa to raise her hand in the sign of victory. If the woman should chance to turn, it would be to swallow the insult and pass on. If the passing woman did not turn, it was enough for Amma Latifa to register the eyes of people observing her blatant challenge. This made her heart leap and brought forth a resounding laugh from the depths of her being.

If it occurred to one of her more judicious friends to reprove her and ask her for restraint from this puerile provocation, Amma Latifa's one, unchanging reply was:

"We have made sacrifices and we deserve this victory. Anyone who doesn't like it can go pave the sea."

But the others did not go down to the sea to pave it. Instead they went off to collect themselves and, in secret, to work on a new plan to realise the full extent of their aims. They would return to the village to triumph over the party that had been victorious over them, they would regain a glory they had lost and lift heads that, in their absence, had been bowed with dejection.

Those left in the village, the old, the women and the children, shared in this plan, each in their own way. To the victors they would appear submissive and broken in spirit. They even taught their children to deal with provocation from the other children without fighting, even if those provocations were humiliating in the extreme. The mothers harboured the secret promise in their hearts and divulged it not even to a fleeting breeze. This is what enabled each to live through hard times patiently, with hope that relief would come.

On the opposing side, the victorious party was content with the triumphs it had established and slept on glory, happy with slogans and graffiti, and erecting billboards in the streets, all pointing to the greatness of the party's chief, his sound leadership and his brilliant victory over his enemies, always pointing to the submission of the other party. The children learnt songs and went shouting them out in the alleyways, to humiliate the other children. One group discovered that to raise the fore and index fingers to form the letter "v" meant victory. They were delighted with this discovery and went around making this sign whether it was appropriate or not.

And so Amma Latifa adopted this sign. In fact she turned it into *the* sign of provocation and absolute victory, far exceeding the behaviour of the women of her party. As she

passed into a fanaticism of the most extreme kind, it built a dividing wall between her and the others, and the circle of people around her began to dwindle. And then one day she woke up and found herself alone and isolated in her room, alienated from everyone... from even her husband and children. They had refused to go beyond the point that she had set between herself and anyone who did not agree wholeheartedly with her.

Thus she began to forget the real enemy, and the battle came to the doors of her own house. It reached the point where anyone who disagreed with her was, in her opinion, suspect. It was this that made her eldest son confront her angrily, shouting, "Don't you see that you've really taken this too far?" And calling upon her battery of insults, she replied, "You call yourself a man? Be a man and keep out of my way!"

The boy was stunned by this reaction, and thought that his mother must be suffering from some fit of madness.

And there was some truth in this. For there is such a thing as a delusion of greatness that afflicts people, blinding their eyes to reality and making their ears deaf to the truth of either the whispering voices or the cries about them. They go about life and work as though the world is empty of all but their presence, as though everyone in the world but their own generous selves is worthless... Then suddenly, a strange voice rumbles on the horizon, and the storm rages from all directions, and arms encircle them... arms encircle them.

Amma Latifa saw those arms when she woke in panic before the break of dawn... She saw trees stirring on the village outcrop.

"I'm not waking from a dream, am I?" she said. "Trees are not human, and if so it's impossible for them to be moving from one place to another."

But her eyes were not deceiving her. The spirit of Zarqa' Al Yamama[2] was seeping into her soul and assuring her, "Sure, the trees are walking on the village outcrop."

2

She went to her husband's bed and shook him.

"Get up, you man, get up and look, do you see what I do on the horizon?"

There was no light showing the way. No moon, no stars... The universe calm, holding its breath, ready to let out the scream of first light and open the way for the queen of warmth and light.

The man rubbed his eyes, yawned and sat up, meaning to tell his wife, "Go back to your bed -- you live in a world of hallucinations and nightmares."

He would have said that and more had he not heard the first shot shatter the calm, soon followed by a second and a third.

"They've come back!..." he said to his wife, fear flickering in his eyes. "They've caught us by surprise... Where is my gun?"

She rushed to the cellar and looked for the unused gun... the gun, mute since the days of the forgotten war.

And the trees continued along their path, drawing nearer until they were parallel with the houses, and had advanced further and further along the narrow tracks, sending shivers of fear into the resigned souls of the drowsy people.

Amma Latifa leaned out of a small window looking down over all the entrances leading to the village, and she saw the roads turning into canals and rivers, overflowing with what its liberal stream was carrying, and pouring inexorably towards her house.

She went back to her husband and shook him violently.

"Why don't you shoot? You have the gun in your hands! Why?"

The man did not reply. He stood, fixed to the spot, the gun resting on his shoulder... the gun that had been mute since the beginning of the first war.

Waking from long unconsciousness, Amma Latifa came to in a flash. And she saw the truth as it amassed itself before her at the barrel of a rusting rifle. She heard footsteps on the walls and rooves, approaching the door of the house,

approaching a safety belt that she had woven around herself as the larva weaves the prison of its isolation. And as the larva does, so did Aunt Latifa.

She turned further and further into the depth of herself, throwing doors closed behind her... then she began to descend the staircase leading to the furthest corner in the cellar. And there she remained for days, neither moving nor taking a morsel of food or drink, until she turned into a basket of bones wrapped in a shroud of wrinkled skin. (17-29)

Translated by Rebecca Porteous

1. A formulaic greeting to somebody whose relation has recently died. Literally, "compensation in your safety" it is understood to mean roughly "may God compensate us all for the loss we have suffered with your safe arrival among us and safe departure from us." (17)
2. A legendary figure from the pre-Islamic period. She could see to a distance of three-days' travel. (25)

Emily Nasrallah (1931-) Emily Nasrallah was born in 1931 and received her BA in education and literature from Beirut University College and the American University in Beirut. While still a freshman, she started to write as a journalist and then stayed on in the city after graduating to continue in the profession. She won two prizes for her first book, the novel *Birds of September*, published in 1962. Since then Nasrallah has published five novels, one children's novel, and five collections of short stories. Of this work, much has been translated into other languages: English, German, Danish, French, and Italian. In 1991 Nasrallah won the Khalil Gibran prize for literature. (91)

"Aunt Latifa" – Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions : Answer the following questions. The questions may help you think about the ideas you might use in further discussions or in an essay.

1. For how many years have the relations between two factions of the narrator's family been severed?

   a. 20 years
   b. 25 years
   c. 2 years
   d. 10 years

2. What figures of speech are employed in the phrase: "... and a clear wailing rang out like the howling of winter storms in the depths of the valley"?

   a. metaphor and symbolism
   b. symbolism and personification
   c. personification and simile
   d. hyperbole and simile

3. What is the conflict the narrator is experiencing in the twelfth and thirteenth paragraphs of the short story?

   a. man vs. man
   b. man vs. society
   c. man vs. himself
   d. man vs. nature

4. What action did Aunt Latifa's friends suggest she restrain herself from doing because it was so humiliating and insulting to the losing side?

   a. raising her hand in a "v" for victory sign
   b. voice an insult directly
   c. offer a blatant challenge
   d. laugh from the depths of her being

5. Using context clues, what is the meaning of "puerile provocation"?

   a. rude and bold insults
   b. humiliating cat-calling
   c. immature way of inciting
   d. blatant rudeness

6. What was the losing side's ultimate and ulterior plan?

   a. to insult Aunt Latifa herself
   b. to triumph someday over Aunt Latifa's party
   c. to regain the glory that they lost in the earlier civil war
   d. both b and c

7. How did the losing side feign submission?

   a. They taught their children to deal with threats without fighting.
   b. They appeared submission and broken in spirit.
   c. Women kept the secret of planned attack to themselves.
   d. All of the above

8. How had Aunt Latifa alienated her own family and her friends?

   a. She picked one too many arguments.
   b. She became a fanatic with the conceit of her victory and delusions of greatness.
   c. She refused to see anyone and locked herself in her room.
   d. She insulted and shunned everyone thereby isolating herself.

9. "Thus she began to forget the real enemy, and the battle came to the doors of her own home." Name the conflict here.

   a. man vs. man
   b. man vs. society
   c. man vs. himself
   d. man vs. nature

10. Aunt Latifa's tragic flaw was that

   a. she thought everyone was worthless except herself
   b. she was blind to reality and truth
   c. she ignored the pleas, whispers, and cries of others
   d. all of the above

11. What were the "trees stirring on the village outcrop" that Aunt Latifa thought she saw?

   a. She hadn't awakened from a dream/ nightmare.
   b. Her eyes were not focused and were playing tricks on her.
   c. She was delusional from hunger and isolation.
   d. She didn't realize it was the enemy under camouflage.

12. Who is "the queen of warmth and light"?

   a. Aunt Latifa
   b. the sun
   c. the narrator
   d. the ruling leader

13. Why didn't her husband shoot to defend themselves?

   a. He was resigned to defeat because the situation was hopeless.
   b. They were all unprepared and taken by surprise.
   c. The barrel of the rifle was rusted from non-use.
   d. All of the above

14. The safety belt that Aunt Latifa wove around herself is being compared to

a. a prison of isolation
b. the security of her own home
c. the long unconsciousness of seclusion
d. the larva weaving a cacoon

15. What conflict does Aunt Latifa face at the conclusion of the story?

a. man vs. herself
b. man vs. society
c. man vs. nature
d. all of the above

16. Why did Aunt Latifa choose death?

a. Aunt Latifa's new awareness becomes the author of her own destruction as she cannot live with the implications of a war she has supported for so long.
b. Aunt Latifa goes deep into despair engendered by the war.
c. The destructive nature of was has proved to be singularly unselective.
d. All of the above

17. Which phrase did the author use at both the beginning and end of the short story to tie the image of Aunt Latifa together?
a. "... she turned further and further into the depths of herself..."
b. "... she turned into a basket of bones wrapped in a shroud of wrinkled skin."
c. "... she began to descend the staircase leading to the further corner of the cellar."
d. "... there she remained for days."

In Loving Memory of Khubayb

Hassan Ibn Thabit

The enemy allies have converged on me,
Inciting their clansmen to muster strength;
They've invited their women and children to see,
And tied me to a solid trunk.
To Allah I complain of my loneliness and suffering;
Of enemies who surround me to rejoice at my death.
O Master of the Mighty Throne, grant me strength,
To bear what they are doing to me;
Piercing my flesh and tearing my limbs.
They gave me a choice to turn away from Thee,
But death is preferable to that;
That very thought of which brings tears to my eyes,
Not the pain they inflict on me.
I am not afraid of death, for some day everyone has to die;
But I shudder out of fear for the fire of Hell,
For the fury of its flames.
These limbs of mine are a sacrifice for Allah,
Hoping He'll bless every limb offered in His way.
So long I die a Muslim, I don't regret a thing,
For my death will occur in Allah's way. [Internet Source]

Hassan Ibn Thabit (Biography Unavailable)

"In Loving Memory of Khubayb" – Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions. The questions my help you think about the ideas you might want to use in further discussions or in an essay.

1. "The enemy allies have converged on me...." What is the meaning of "converged"?

   a. met together against me
   b. sought me out
   c. turned on me
   d. imprisoned

2. For what does the Muslim soldier pray?

   a. to complain of his loneliness and suffering
   b. to hope God will bless him
   c. to ask for strength
   d. all of the above

3. What does the protagonist in the poem fear the most?

   a. death
   b. suffering
   c. fear of damnation
   d. flaming fires

4. What is the nature of the war being fought in this poem?

   a. a civil war
   b. a political war
   c. a religious war
   d. a social issue war

5. Who is Allah?

   a. his religion
   b. his God
   c. his county's leader
   d. his Muslim conscience

6. What must the captured and tortured soldier do in order to be spared his life?

   a. to renounce his country
   b. to provide secret information
   c. to sacrifice his limbs
   d. to renounce his beliefs

The Martyr

Ibrahim Tuqan

Disaster frowned;
But he was smiling.
Terror surged up;
He plunged into it.
Serene in spirit and mind
Steadfast of heart and stride.
Reckless of injury,
Undeterred by pain
His soul was possessed
By high endeavor
Nobler than all
Its elements: flame and tempests.
Combining the turbulent sea
With the steadfast heights
It stems from the nature of sacrifice
From the essence of noble giving
A torch of justice whose scorching heat
Many times has set nations free.

Along the path of greatness he walks,
Seeking eternity as a dwelling place,
Indifferent whether to chains
Or to death he comes at last,
Pledged to his resolution.

Perhaps death took him
While still confined in prison
And neither a tear from a loved one
or family bade him farewell.
Perhaps he was lowered into the ground
Without even a shroud.
Who knows whether it is the plain
That hides his body, or the mountain peak.
Do not ask where his body lies --
His name is on the lips of time.
He was the guiding star that shone through
The darkness of trial.
Bringer of light to eyes so that they should
Not know slumber.
Casting flame into hearts,
So they do not know rancor.

What face glowed with joy,
Going willingly into death
Singing forth before the world
As his soul ascended to heaven
"I am for God and Country!" (106-107)

Translated by Lena Jayyusi and John Heath-Stubbs

Ibrahim Tuqan (1905-1941) Palestinian poet. He was the foremost poet of his generation in Palestine, and devoted much of his poetic energy to the Palestine cause. He employed a terse and poignant phraseology and his themes ranged from the strictly personal to the broadly national. His tone could be ardent and gentle when delineating a personal experience, grand and ceremonial when speaking of the national struggle, and sarcastic and ironic when attacking national ills. His poetry was published in Arab newspapers and was widely quoted. After his death it was collected in a single volume, *Diwan Ibrahim Tuqan*. (106)

"The Martyr" – Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions: Answer the following questions. The questions may help you think about the ideas you might want to use in further discussions or in an essay.

1. Another possible title for this poem could be

   a. "The Unknown Soldier"
   b. "The Dauntless Veteran"
   c. "The Noble Hero"
   d. "The Unsung Warrior"

2. "Disaster frowned;/ But he was smiling. Terror surged up;/ He plunged into it." These lines are examples of

   a. irony
   b. antithesis
   c. personification
   d. paradox

3. The protagonist of the poem is compared to

   a. a torch of justice
   b. a guiding star that shown through
   c. a name on the lips of time
   d. all of the above

4. The tone of Ibrahim Tuqan's poem is

   a. admiration
   b. envy
   c. regret
   d. cheerfulness

5. How could this person have died ?

   a. on a mission of sacrifice and death
   b. fighting a battle and charging headlong into the enemy
   c. in a prison cell as a staunch defender of his cause
   d. all of the above

A Meeting of Veterans of the Palmach in 1978 in Maayan Harod

Yehuda Amichai

Here at the foot of Mount Gilboa we assembled,
A meeting of sorcerers,
Each with the spirits of his own dead.

There were faces that only after a few days
Exploded with memory, in the blinding light
Of recognition. But it was too late
To say: it's you.

There were closed faces like the stuffed letter box
Of people who have been away for a long time.
The weeping not wept, the laughter not laughed,
The word not said.

There was a path, at twilight, between the orchards
Lined by cypresses. But we didn't walk
Into the fragrant darkness that makes us remember
And makes us forget.

Like guests who linger at the door
After the meal, so we lingered thirty or more years,
Without the will to leave and without the power to return,
The hosts already asleep in their darkness.

Farewell the living and the dead together. Even
The flag at half-mast flutters joyfully
In the breeze. Even longing is a bunch
Of sweet grapes from which they tread wine for feast
and festival.

And you, my few friends, go now
Each of you to lead his herd of memories
To pastures
Where there is no memory. (12-13)

* *Palmach: The commando units of the Israeli army during the War of Independence*

Yehuda Amichai (1910 -) A lifelong Zionist and resident of Jerusalem since 1935, Yehuda Amichai is widely regarded as the poet laureate of Israel -- a title he modestly rejects. Amichai, whose poetry has been translated into 31 languages, served In the Jewish Brigade of the British Army in World War II and later smuggled arms to the Palmach Jewish underground. Amichai has written about 150 poems on Jerusalem and lives in Yemin Moshe, the first Jewish neighborhood to be built outside of the Old City walls. Fighting cancer, Amichai is wryly incisive about the weight of history on all who live in the city. "I once saw two lovers embracing in Jerusalem," he says. "I told them to be careful because here every love can turn into a new religion." (24)

"A Meeting of Veterans of the Palmach in 1978 in Maayan Harod" – Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions. The questions may help you think about the ideas you might want to use in further discussions or essays.

1. Who are the "sorcerers" in line two of Amacai's poem?

   a. returning veteran soldiers
   b. the enemy soldiers from the past
   c. spiritual mystics
   d. the dead comrades of the war

2. The tone of the second stanza is one of

   a. sadness
   b. happiness
   c. surprise
   d. regret

3. Who are "the hosts" spoken about at the end of the fifth verse?

   a. the 30-year veterans
   b. the fallen comrades
   c. the dead and living soldiers of the war
   d. the sponsors of the reunion

4. The predominant figure of speech in the line "Even longing is a bunch of sweet grapes from which they tread wine for a feast and festival" of the sixth stanza is

   a. symbolism
   b. alliteration
   c. allusion
   d. metaphor

5. What is the reason for their meeting thirty or more years after the war ?

   a. to honor the memory of fallen comrades
   b. to reunite surviving veterans of that war
   c. to bid farewell to aged living comrades
   d. both a and c

6. What is the tone of the entire poem by Yahuda Amachai?

   a. regret
   b. foreboding
   c. sadness
   d. fear

7. The underlying conflict in the poem is

   a. man vs. man
   b. man vs. himself
   c. man vs. society
   d. man vs. supernatural

8. The main effect of the War of Independence at Palmach was on

   a. the fallen soldiers of that war
   b. the returning veteran soldiers
   c. the friends of the veterans
   d. both a and b

The Sapling of Peace

Ada Aharoni

The mothers bore children,
The children had to go to war.
In October, children ceased to be;
End of October, the fire ceased.
The distraught mothers and fathers
And what was left of their children,
Could do naught in their scorching sorrow
But plant, a frail sapling
In the desert sand
Under the burnt skeleton of tanks
Fringed with human limbs
No shade or crutch could help.
The sapling was carried to Geneva
By sure hands.
Was watered by the blue lake,
By the Bible and the Koran,
And by the wise Tagore
Who sang of love.
Despite its desert origins:
The years of passion and fire
Inflaming the thorns of anger and despair,
It sprouted green leaves
With amazing patterns of kaleidoscopic dewdrops
Of peace. [Internet Source]

Ada Aharoni (Not Given) Ada Aharoni is an Israeli professor, researcher, writer, poet, and lecturer. She writes in English and Hebrew and has published twenty-two books to date that have been translated into several languages. She believes that culture and literature can help in healing the urgent ailments of our global village, such as war and conflict, and the themes of peace and conflict resolution are major ones throughout her works. She studied at London University where she earned an M. Phil. Degree on Henry Fielding, and at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem where she was awarded a Ph.D. on Saul Bellow, the Nobel Prize Laureate. [Internet Source]

"The Sapling of Peace" – Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions. The questions may help you think about the ideas you might want to use in further discussion or in an essay.

1. The planted tree was a symbol representing

   a. the lost war
   b. the lost children of the war
   c. the parents' sorrow
   d. the parents' pride

2. What figure of speech is employed in the lines: "Under the burnt skeleton of tanks/ Fringed with human limbs/ No shade or crutch could help...."?

   a. personification
   b. symbolism
   c. metaphor
   d. simile

3. What does "Geneva" represent to the people of the desert sands?

   a. a place of solace
   b. a place of quiet
   c. a place of fairness
   d. a place of peace

4. What does "Was watered by the blue lake,/ By the Bible and the Koran,/ And by the wise Tagore/ Who sang of love...." mean?

   a. Geneva has the perfect setting and climate for the sapling
   b. Geneva has negotiated peace for many people of many cultures
   c. Geneva is blessed by all religions and is, therefore, a holy place to plant a sapling
   d. all of the above

5. The tone of Ada Aharoni's poem is

   a. hopeful
   b. cheerful
   c. optimistic
   d. reminiscent

Secrets

Ahmad 'Abd al-Mu'ti Hijazi

(To the handicapped Arab veterans I met in the streets of Paris.)

There. . . you are revealing your secret to me alone.

When you move through foreign cities
you hide your secrets in your grim-colored clothes,
behind black spectacles;
But *here* you reveal your secret to me alone.

Perhaps you saw my blood
sniff at you for a trace of its youth,
or maybe you glimpsed your houses under my skin
and so showed me what you hide.

A strange, beautiful flock
evasive to every call
hiding behind its sagging color
those frozen, inveterate tears.

Your blood surged forth unaware
on roads you had grown attuned to
blood you tried to bar from a wilted hand,
eyes brimming with beads of tears --
And where did you give away your eyes?
Beneath the stars which once shone on my cheek.

Who did you offer your leg to?
I gave it to those who will be born after me.

Look!
You who come
with half your bodies
from villages that lack their share
of the flesh of sons --

Look!
How attractive these foreign cities are,
how much a stranger needs his arm or leg there.
But you pass the city's beauty
like gracious heavenly birds,
and I keep tracking you
lost in its streets,
groping in my own rotting flesh
and entering my grave at night. (264-265)

Translated by Sargon Boulus and Peter Porter

Ahmad 'Abd al-Mu'ti Hijazi (*1935 - *) Egyptian poet. He studied first in Egypt, then worked in journalism before going to France to continue his graduate studies. At present he holds a position in the Department of Arabic Studies at the University of Paris. He has published five collections of poetry, the first of which, *City Without Heart*, (1959), made an immediate impact. He treats various subjects in his verse, particularly' the problem of alienation and powerlessness in tile face of modern city life. His work has a confessional, self-denuding tone that is rather different from much of contemporary Arabic poetry. (261)

"Secrets" – Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions: Answer the following questions. The questions may help you think about the ideas you might want to use in further discussions or in an essay.

1. In the first two stanzas, when one Arab veteran sees a fellow Arab veteran, what does he connect with the most?

   a. the infirmity/war wound of the other
   b. the grim-colored clothing worn
   c. the black spectacles covering blindness
   d. his own youth in the other veteran

2. What is the "strange, beautiful flock" in the third stanza refer to?

   a. birds
   b. tears
   c. soldiers
   d. blood

3. What is the tone expressed in the poem?

   a. sympathetic recognition
   b. angry vengence
   c. fearful anticipation
   d. deep sadness

4. Which descriptive phrase alerts the reader to the veterans' " common bond" ?

   a. "Perhaps you saw my blood/ sniff at you for a trace of its youth"
   b. "And where did you give away your eyes?/ Beneath the stars which once shone on my cheek"
   c. "... or maybe you glimpsed your houses under my skin/ and so showed me what you hide"
   d. all of the above

5. What does the protagonist of "Secrets" fear the most in the poem?

   a. the veteran not recognizing him
   b. being alone at night
   c. survival with a war wound
   d. death

6. What is the major conflict in this poem?

   a. man vs. man
   b. man vs. society
   c. man vs. himself
   d. man vs. nature

7. In the third stanza, what is the meaning of "inveterate" tears?

   a. slight
   b. youthful
   c. false
   d. deep-rooted

8. What does the sixth stanza mean? "You come/ with half your bodies/ from villages that lack their share/ of the flesh of sons"

   a. the handicapped and maimed veterans came from hometowns that suffered many losses of lives
   b. psychologically the veterans are torn between memories of war and memories of home
   c. physically they are in Paris, but mentally they are on a battlefield
   d. the veterans who are maimed but alive left the villages, and now the population there is scarce

9. What figure of speech is employed in the lines: "Perhaps you saw my blood/ sniff at you for a trace of its youth"

   a. symbol
   b. personification
   c. hyperbole
   d. metaphor

10. On whom or what is the main effect of this war years after it happened ?

   a. the crippled and maimed soldiers who survived
   b. the foreign cities who accommodted the veterans
   c. on those born after the war had ended
   d. on the civilian survivors of the war in the village

Since Then

Yehuda Amichai

I fell in battle at Ashdod
In the War of Independence.
My mother said then, he's twenty-four,
Now she says he's fifty-four
And she lights a candle of remembrance
Like birthday candles
You blow out on a cake.

Since then my father died of pain and sorrow
Since then my sisters married
And named their children after me,
Since then my house is my grave and my grave, my house,
For I fell in the pale sands
Of Ashdod.

Since then all the cypresses and all the orange trees
Between Negbah and Yad Mordechai
Walk in a slow funeral procession,
Since then all my children and all my fathers
Are orphaned and bereaved
Since then all my children and all my fathers
Walk together with linked hands
In a demonstration against death.
For I fell in the war
In the soft sands of Ashdod.

I carried my comrade on my back.
Since then I always feel his dead body
Like a weighted heaven upon me,
Since then he feels my arched back under him,
Like an arched segment of the earth's crust.
For I fell in the terrible sands of Ashdod
Not just him.

And since then I compensate myself for my death
With loves and dark feasts
Since then I am of blessed memory,
Since then I don't want God to avenge me.
Since then I don't want my mother to cry for me
With her handsome, precise face,
Since then I battle against pain,
Since then I march against my memories
Like a man against the wind,
Since then I weep for my memories
Like a man for his dead,
Since then I put out my memories
Like a man, a fire.
Since then I am silent.
For I fell at Ashdod
In the War of Independence.

"Emotions erupted!" so they said then, "Hopes
Mounted," so they said but say no more,
"The arts burgeoned," so said the history books,
"Science flourished," so they said then,
"The evening breeze cooled
Their burning brow," so they said then,
"The morning breeze ruffled their hair,"
So they said.
But since then winds do other things,
And since then words say other things
(Don't tell me I'm alive),
For I fell in the soft, pale sands
Of Ashdod in the War of Independence. (1-2)

Yehuda Amichai (1910 -) A lifelong Zionist and resident of Jerusalem since 1935, Yehuda Amichai is widely regarded as the poet laureate of Israel -- a title he modestly rejects. Amichai, whose poetry has been translated into 31 languages, served In the Jewish Brigade of the British Army in World War II and later smuggled arms to the Palmach Jewish underground. Amichai has written about 150 poems on Jerusalem and lives in Yemin Moshe, the first Jewish neighborhood to be built outside of the Old City walls. Fighting cancer, Amichai is wryly incisive about the weight of history on all who live in the city. "I once saw two lovers embracing in Jerusalem," he says. "I told them to be careful because here every love can turn into a new religion." (24)

"Since Then" – Multiple Choice Questions

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions. The questions may help you think about the ideas you might want to use in further discussions or essays.

1. Hypothesize how the narrator died in battle.

   a. He died while carrying a comrade to safety.
   b. He died of thirst in the pale sands of the desert.
   c. God avenged him for abandoning an injured soldier.
   d. He died in a demonstration for the War of Independence.

2. In the fifth stanza, the most deliberate literary techniques employed are

   a. symbolism and alliteration
   b. simile and repetition
   c. alliteration and understatement
   d. hyperbole and repetition

3. The meaning of the word "burgeoned" in the last verse is

   a. were restricted
   b. were repressed
   c. flourished
   d. were created

4. Throughout the eight stanzas of the poem by Amachai, the unifying and repeated words are

   a. at Ashdod
   b. of Ashdod
   c. I fell
   d. since then

5. The words "I fell" actually mean

   a. I suffered
   b. I died
   c. I was conquered
   d. I survived after defeat

6. The tone of the poem in the last stanza, particularly in the last six lines is

   a. regret touched with hope
   b. cynicism touched with bitterness
   c. sadness touched with sarcasm
   d. anger touched with hatred

7. Two lines that symbolically and religiously indicate that "Since Then" is written in first person posthumous point of view are

   a. "And she lights a candle of remembrance" and "Since then I am of blessed memory"
   b. "I fell in the battle of Ashdod" and "Since then I don't want my mother to cry for me"
   c. "Since then my house is my grave and my grave, my house" and "Now he's fifty-four"
   d. "Since then I put out my memories" and "For I fell in the pale sands"

8. The effects of this war for independence were felt on

   a. the narrator himself
   b. the narrator's ancestral and future family
   c. the narrator's present family
   d. all of the above

This Cursed War

From an Israeli Soldier's Yom Kippur War Diary

The night creeps long
funeral throng,
darkens. Memories rush
and flood
blood.
Blossoming lists of dead
thumps red.
Every name pins mind
with writhing missiles.
Cursed, cursed war

In a jeep, on Golan Heights
loneliest I have ever been,
I watch skeletons of tanks
Crowned with names of friends.
Sinister row, black graves
fresh bodies – old smell.
Cursed, cursed war

It doesn't look at all like wars in films,
this war --
Here we do not get a chance to shoot
Or wave a flag –
Shrieking shells, hyena lightning
Pour on us and we run backwards
or forwards
Or to the side
And some are saved
and some are not,
Not all, not always
But always cursing
This cursed, cursed war.

In an English centurion
Holding Belgian guns,
We watch two American-made airplanes
Shot down by Russian-made missiles.
I cannot hate the Syrian on the other side
Who holds a French gun
And shoots Soviet SAMs

For we are both toy soldiers of shopkeepers
Who want to sell –
Selling us, in this
Cursed, cursed war!

God, let it stop, let it end,
Let the nightmare end!
Cursing is the only shelter
We can creep into,
Not to crumble
Before thoughts in the dark,
Cursed are those who force me to be here
In this cursed, cursed war! (Internet Source)

(Biography Unavailable)

"This Cursed War" – Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions: Answer the following questions. The questions may help you think about the ideas you might want to use in further discussions or in an essay.

1. Who are the "shopkeepers" spoken about in this poem?

   a. the warring countries
   b. the countries selling weapons of war
   c. the enemy
   d. both a and b

2. To the Israeli soldier in the poem, war does not seem

   a. romanticized
   b. heroic
   c. idealized
   d. all of the above

3. The tone of the third stanza is

   a. one of anger
   b. full of terror and confusion
   c. full of fear and panic
   d. one of foreboding

4. Several nationalities are mentioned in the fourth stanza. Why?

   a. to emphasize that many countries have fought in wars
   b. to emphasize that the Israeli/Syrian weaponry is from several countries who have taken sides in this war
   c. to emphasize that this is a global war
   d. to emphasize that war is fought on an international scale

5. What is the only reprieve the soldiers have to fight this war, since all else seems futile?

   a. praying to God
   b. scurring about to avoid being hit
   c. cursing
   d. all of the above

6. The two conflicts present in this poem are

   a. man vs. himself and society
   b. man vs. himself and God
   c. man vs. society and God
   d. man vs. society and man

Western Literature

"Armistice Day" by Zelma Dunning Bowen

"Exposure" by Wilfred Owen

"The Medal" by Taufiq Rafat

"The Next War" by Osbert Sitwell

"A Paper Soldier" by Bulat Okudzhava

"The Seed" by Hal Summers

"The Sniper" by Liam O'Flaherty

From: ***The Things They Carried*** by Tim O'Brien

Armistice Day

Zelma Dunning Bowen

I saw your son march by today,
His colors all unfurled,
But my son sleeps in Flanders Field
Halfway across the world.

I heard the martial music roll.
I heard the crowds' wild cheers.
I saw a gallant smiling lad
Still marching through my tears.

I saw him marching through war's hell,
Through mud and filth and slime;
My heart's blood marked each weary step
Beside this lad of mine.

I heard them speak today of peace
And of the honored dead,
And I thought of a little wooden cross
That marks a narrow bed.

And then – I thought of another Cross
On a hill, once long ago,
And another Mother who gave her Son
That the world His peace might know.

Zelma Dunning Bowen (Biography Unavailable)

"Armistice Day" – Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions. The questions may help you think about the ideas you might want to use in further discussions or in an essay.

1. "But my son sleeps in Flanders Field...." Which literary technique is employed in this phrase?

   a. symbolism
   b. alliteration
   c. allusion
   d. personification

2. What meter is "Armistice Day" written in?

   a. iambic
   b. anapestic
   c. dactylic
   d. trochaic

3. What is the meaning of "His colors all unfurled"?

   a. his full dress uniform
   b. the color of pride
   c. his medals and award ribbons
   d. the flag of his country

4. Why is the woman in the poem crying?

   a. her son died in the war
   b. she is overwhelmed by patriotism
   c. she know what fate may await the boy
   d. both a and c

5. How many mothers are being referred to in this poem?

   a. one
   b. two
   c. three
   d. four

6. In the fourth stanza, what is the "narrow bed"?

   a. small sleeping quarters
   b. a cot
   c. a coffin
   d. a grave

7. What is the literary device being employed in the last stanza?

   a. (religious) symbol
   b. allusion
   c. (religious) metaphor
   d. a and b

Exposure

Wilfred Owen

Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knive us...
Wearied we keep awake because the night is silent...
Low, drooping flares confuse our memory of the salient...
Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious, nervous,
But nothing happens.

Watching, we hear the mad gusts tugging on the wire,
Like twitching agonies of men among its brambles.
Northward, incessantly, the flickering gunnery rumbles,
Far off, like a dull rumour of some other war.
What are we doing here?

The poignant misery of dawn begins to grow...
We only know war lasts, rain soaks, and clouds sag stormy.
Dawn massing in the east her melancholy army
Attacks once more in ranks on shivering ranks of gray,
But nothing happens.

Sudden successive flight of bullets streak the silence.
Less deadly than the air that shudders black with snow,
With sidelong flowing flakes that flock, pause and renew,
We watch them wandering up and down the wind's nonchalance,
But nothing happens.

Pale flakes with fingering stealth come feeling for our faces—
We cringe in holes, back on forgotten dreams, and stare, snow-dared.
Deep into grassier ditches. So we drowse, sun-dozed,
Littered with blossoms trickling where the blackbird fusses.
Is it that we are dying?

Slowly our ghosts drag home: glimpsing the sunk fires, glozed[0]
With crusted dark-red jewels; crickets jingle there;
For hours the innocent mice rejoice: the house is theirs;
Shutters and doors, all closed: on us the doors are closed, --
We turn back to our dying.

Since we believe not otherwise can kind fires burn;
Nor ever suns smile true on child, or field, or fruit.
For God's invincible spring our love is made afraid;
Therefore, not loath, we lie out here; therefore were born,
For love of God seems dying.

Tonight, His frost will fasten on this mud and us,
Shriveling many hands, puckering foreheads crisp.
The burying-party, picks and shovels in their shaking grasp,
Pause over half-known faces. All their eyes are ice,
But nothing happens. (103-104)

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[0] glazed over

Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) Wilfred Owen was born the 18th of March 1893 in Oswestry (United Kingdom). He was the eldest of four children and brought up in the Anglican religion of the evangelical school. For an evangelical, man is saved not by the good he does; but by the faith he has in the redeeming power of Christ's sacrifice. Though he had rejected much of his belief by 1913, the influence of his education remains visible in his poems and in their themes: sacrifice, Biblical language, his description of Hell. He moved to Bordeaux (France) in 1913, as a teacher of English in the Berlitz School of Languages; one year later he was a private teacher in a prosperous family in the Pyrenees. He enlisted in the Artists'Rifles on 21st October 1915; there followed 14 months of training in England. He was drafted to France in 1917, the worst was winter. His total war experience would be rather short: four months, from which only five weeks in the line. On this is based all his war poetry. After battle experience, thoroughly shocked by horrors of war, he went to Craiglockhart War Hospital near Edinburgh. In August 1918, after his friend, the other great war poet, Siegfried Sassoon, had been severely injured and sent back to England. Owen returned to France. War was still as horrid as before. The butchery was ended on 11th November 1918 at 11 o'clock. Seven days before Owen had been killed in one of the last vain battles of this war. [Internet Source]

"Exposure" – Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions: Answer the following questions. The questions may help you think about the ideas you might want to use in further discussions or essays.

1. The mood conveyed in the first stanza is one of

   a. mystery
   b. foreboding
   c. peacefulness
   d. confusion

2. Lines 13 and 14 (Dawn . . .gray) refer to

   a. storm clouds
   b. advancing soldiers
   c. hungry rats
   d. enemy tanks

3. In stanza 4 of the poem the dominants figure of speech are

   a. onomatopoeia and symbolism
   b. personification and symbolism
   c. oxymoron and alliteration
   d. alliteration and personification

4. In lines 6 through 20, the soldiers are bombarded by

   a. overwhelming hunger
   b. merciless weather
   c. painful memories
   d. paralyzing fear

5. Lines 17 through 19 suggest that the action of the snowflakes is

   a. puzzling
   b. noisy
   c. erratic
   d. threatening

6. The statement "Slowly our ghosts drag home" (line 26) refers to dead comrades as well as

   a. injured animals
   b. living relatives
   c. suffering survivors
   d. absent soldiers

7. The repetition of the phrase "But nothing happens" underscores the soldiers' feelings of

   a. fear
   b. hopelessness
   c. anger
   d. indifference

8. The two main conflicts in the poem are

   a. man vs. man and man vs. nature
   b. man vs. himself and man vs. nature
   c. man vs. society and man vs. nature
   d. man vs. God and man vs. nature

The Medal

Taufiq Rafat

When the telegram arrived
I was combing my hair in the sun
And gossiping with the servants.
It said the Government was sorry
My husband was dead, killed in action.
For two days I did not know
What had happened. Then I woke
To mother's voice in the next room
Comforting a weeping neighbour
(As if she were the bereaved one).
Slowly, full consciousness returned.
I dressed for the first time as a widow.
I ate my first meal as a widow.
When I was resigned to thinking of him
As lying scattered in a rice-field,
A thighbone here, a breastbone there,
The rest gifted to the vultures,
They printed his name in the papers
And a photograph of his bachelor days.
He had died a hero.
The friends trooped in again
This time to congratulate.
I heard my father accepting
The tributes with a tired mouth.
I was invited to the ceremony
Where the general gave me a medal
And patted my son on the head.
For an entire week the little fellow
Strutted around the bazaar
With the medal pinned on his shirt,
And the neighbours gave him sweets.

Now the medal is lying in its box
And is taken out less and less.
What shall I do with it?
A medal has no hands, no lips, no genitals
It is exactly what it looks like:
Just another piece of bronze. (139)

Taufiq Rafat (Biography Unavailable)

"The Medal" – Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions. The questions may help you think about the ideas you might want to use in further discussions or in an essay.

1. Hypothesize the country of the soldier's death.

   a. Germany
   b. Viet Nam
   c. England
   d. Egypt

2. The framework of the poem is built

   a. from denial to resentment
   b. from disbelief to anger
   c. from apathy to sadness
   d. from shock to understanding

3. The parenthetical phrase "(As if she were the bereaved one)" has a tone of

   a. sympathy
   b. resentment
   c. sarcasm
   d. anger

4. What is the meaning of the line: "A medal has no hands, no lips, no genitals"?

   a. a medal has no warmth or tenderness
   b. a medal cannot hold, kiss, caress
   c. a medal cannot father a child
   d. all of the above

The Next War

Osbert Sitwell

The long war had ended.
Its miseries had grown faded.
Deaf men became difficult to talk to,
Heroes became bores.
Those alchemists
Who had converted blood into gold
Had grown elderly.
But they held a meeting,
Saying,
"We think perhaps we ought
To put up tombs
Or erect altars
To those brave lads
Who were so willingly burnt,
Or blinded,
Or maimed,
Who lost all likeness to a living thing,
Or were blown to bleeding patches of flesh
For our sakes.
It would look well.
Or we might even educate the children."
But the richest of these wizards
Coughed gently;
And he said:
"I have always been to the front
-- In private enterprise --,
I yield in public spirit
To no man.
I think yours is a very good idea
-- A capital idea --
And not too costly ...

But it seems to me
That the cause for which we fought
Is again endangered.
What more fitting memorial for the fallen
Than that their children
Should fall for the same cause?"

Rushing eagerly into the street,
The kindly old gentlemen cried
To the young:
"Will you sacrifice
Through your lethargy
What your fathers died to gain?
The world *must* be made safe for the young!"

And the children
Went. . . .

(61-62)

Osbert Sitwell (1892-1969) Sir Osbert Sitwell published nearly 60 works in his lifetime, in almost every genre. Unfortunately, it's difficult to gain respect as a serious writer when you're the son of an English baronet and raised in castles, and even your friends, such as Aldous Huxley and Virginia Woolf, assume you're just a dilettante. Worse still, Osbert's sister, Edith, was a genius who wrote poetry herself, and their brother, Sacheverell, dabbled a bit with the pen as well; the effect was that "the fabulous Sitwells" were often lumped together and trotted out like a circus act. It wasn't until middle age that Sir Osbert undertook the five-part autobiography that established his reputation. In it, he painted amusing sketches of his aristocratic childhood, charming both critics and the public. (Klise 595)

"The Next War" – Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions. The questions may help you think about the ideas you might want to use in further discussions or in an essay.

1. "Deaf men became difficult to talk to,/ Heroes became bores." What do these lines mean?

   a. The old veterans cannot hear, and their stories are redundant.
   b. Deaf men cannot hear the war stories.
   c. The war heroes get tired of talking to hard-of-hearing people.
   d. The deaf veterans and the old heroes have lost their value in society.

2. Who are the "alchemists" being referred to in the fifth and sixth lines?

   a. physicians who made money from war surgeries
   b. private entrepreneurs who want a war memorial
   c. business people who benefited from the profits of war
   d. soldiers who profited from the spoils of war

3. What are the intentions, true or not, of the first spokesperson at the meeting?

   a. to educate children
   b. to erect a war memorial
   c. to begin a new enterprise
   d. both a and

4. What are the intentions of the second man who spoke at the meeting?

   a. to endorse the first man's suggestion for a memorial
   b. to propose philanthropic deeds toward the community
   c. to raise capital for the "endangered" cause
   d. to promote selfish economic personal gain

5. The word "wizards" parallels which other word in the poem?

   a. heroes
   b. alchemists
   c. elderly
   d. brave lads

6. How does the second spokesperson entice the next generation to fight in a war?

   a. that they should proudly sacrifice as their fathers' had
   b. that they must keep the world safe for their children
   c. that they must protect what their fathers died for
   d. all of the above

7. What dies "lethargy" mean near the end of the poem?

   a. courage and bravery
   b. family heritage
   c. laziness and indifference
   d. callousness

A Paper Soldier

Bulat Okudzkava

In our world there lived a soldier.
He was extremely handsome, very brave,
but he happened to be a children's toy --
for he was merely a paper soldier.

He wished to refashion all the world,
to make each individual happy,
but he dangled over a child's cot,
for he was merely a paper soldier.

He would have dashed through smoke and fire,
and given his life for you twice over,
but you only derided him and laughed –
for he was merely a paper soldier.

You were unwilling to entrust
him with your most important secrets.
And why did you not trust him? Oh, just
because he was a paper soldier.

And kicking against his wretched lot,
he thirsted for a life less tranquil,
and kept demanding: "Fire! Yes, Fire!"
forgetting he was a paper soldier.

Into fire? All right. Why not plunge in?
And bravely forward he marched off.
And there he perished, nothing won --
for he was merely a paper soldier. (65-66)

Bulat Okudzhava (not given) Bulat Okudzhava is considered as the father of Russia's bard movement which counts poet-singers Alexander Galich and Vladimir Vysotsky as its followers. He started singing his poems in the late 1950s at a time when Russians felt the need for individual expression. (Glenworth 38)

"A Paper Soldier" – Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions. The questions may help you think about the ideas you might want to use in further discussions or in an essay.

1. Choose the tones of the poem from the beginning to the end of the piece, please.

   a. happiness to despair
   b. optimism to sad reality
   c. adventuresome to heroism
   d. naiveté to awareness

2. "He thirsted for a life less tranquil" means

   a. he craved adventure
   b. he wanted to be a hero
   c. he wanted to fight in a war
   d. all of the above

3. What does "Fire! Yes, Fire!" refer to?

   a. to fire at an enemy
   b. to jump into the fires of war
   c. to fire a weapon
   d. all of the above

4. What is a "paper soldier"?

   a. the naïve and overlooked soldier
   b. the child's toy
   c. the government's toy
   d. both a and c

The Seed

Hal Summers

I am the small million.
I am the locked fountain.

Late, late, in summer's dotage
When they stand gaunt and blasted,
The hollyhock tower and the cottage
Of clover, and age has wasted
The sun -- then, then at last
I jump, I glide, a waif
Victoriously lost,
Tempestuously safe.

I go as weak as sea-water.
I lie as quiet as radium.

In the dust-high caravan, in
The cabin of a bird's claw,
Or sheepback I travel, I have been
In the whale, his prophesying maw;
I have occupied both town
And parish, an airborne spirit, a
Soldier in thistledown,
A meek inheritor.

I am dry but I shall slake you
I am hard but I shall satisfy you.

The apple contains me and I
Contain the apple, I balance
A field on a stalk and tie
A century's voices in silence;
And all the hopes of the happy
And all the sighs of the sorry
Rest in my power to copy
And copying vary.

I am the first omega.
I am the last alpha.

And remember, I lie beneath
All soils of time, fears' frost;
Remember, I stir in my death,
Most missed I am least lost;
Remember, in the gaunt garden
In the kingdom of a broken tree
You will find after Armageddon,
After the deluge, me. (196-197)

(Biography Unavailable)

"The Seed" – Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions. The questions may help you think about the ideas you might want to use in further discussions or in an essay.

1. What figure of speech is employed in the following lines: "I am the small million./ I am the locked fountain"?

   a. hyperbole
   b. metaphor
   c. personification
   d. simile

2. What season does the seed get released in?

   a. spring
   b. summer
   c. autumn
   d. winter

3. "I lie as quiet as radium" is an example of

   a. hyperbole
   b. metaphor
   c. personification
   d. simile

4. The fourth stanza describes

   a. places the seed has flourished
   b. places the seed has invaded
   c. places the seed has sprouted
   d. places the seed has wilted

5. The sentence "The apple contains me and I/ Contain the apple" is an example of

   a. antithesis
   b. paradox
   c. allusion
   d. oxymoron

6. The tone of Hal Summers' poem is

   a. proud
   b. challenging
   c. optimistic
   d. all of the above

7. The seed in this poem becomes a symbol of

   a. regeneration
   b. God
   c. rebirth and peace
   d. the alpha and omega

The Sniper

Liam O'Flaherty

The long June twilight faded into night. Dublin lay enveloped in darkness but for the dim light of the moon that shone through fleecy clouds, casting a pale light as of approaching dawn over the streets and the dark waters of the Liffey. Around the beleaguered Four Courts the heavy guns roared. Here and there through the city machine guns and rifles broke the silence of the night spasmodically, like dogs barking on lone farms. Republicans and Free Staters were waging civil war.

On a rooftop near O'Connell Bridge a Republican sniper lay watching. Beside him lay his rifle, and over his shoulders were slung a pair of field glasses. His face was the face of a student—thin and ascetic—but his eyes had the cold gleam of the fanatic. They were deep and thoughtful, the eyes of a man who is used to look at death.

He was eating a sandwich hungrily. He had eaten nothing since morning. He had been too excited to eat. He finished the sandwich, and taking a flask of whiskey from his pocket, he took a short draught. Then he returned the flask to his pocket. He paused for a moment, considering whether he should risk a smoke. It was dangerous. The flash might be seen in the darkness, and there were enemies watching. He decided to take the risk. Placing a cigarette between his lips, he struck a match, inhaled the smoke hurriedly, and put out the light. Almost immediately, a bullet flattened itself against the parapet of the roof. The sniper took another whiff and put out the cigarette. Then he swore softly and crawled away to the left.

Cautiously he raised himself and peered over the parapet. There was a flash, and a bullet whizzed over his head. He dropped immediately. He had seen the flash. It came from the opposite side of the street.

He rolled over the roof to a chimney stack in the rear and slowly drew himself up behind it until his eyes were level with the top of the parapet. There was nothing to be seen—just the dim outline of the opposite housetop against the blue sky. His enemy was under cover.

Just then an armored car came across the bridge and advanced slowly up the street. It stopped on the opposite side of the street fifty yards ahead. The sniper could hear the dull panting of the motor. His heart beat faster. It was an enemy car. He wanted to fire, but he knew it was useless. His bullets would never pierce the steel that covered the gray monster.

Then round the corner of a side street came an old woman, her head covered by a tattered shawl. She began to talk to the man in the turret of the car. She was pointing to the roof where the sniper lay. An informer.

The turret opened. A man's head and shoulders appeared, looking toward the sniper. The sniper raised his rifle and fired. The head fell heavily on the turret wall. The woman darted toward the side street. The sniper fired again. The woman whirled round and fell with a shriek into the gutter.

Suddenly from the opposite roof a shot rang out, and the sniper dropped his rifle with a curse. The rifle clattered to the roof. The sniper thought the noise would wake the dead. He stopped to pick the rifle up. He couldn't lift it. His forearm was dead. He

muttered, "I'm hit."

Dropping flat onto the roof, he crawled back to the parapet. With his left hand he felt the injured right forearm. The blood was oozing through the sleeve of his coat. There was no pain—just a deadened sensation, as if the arm had been cut off.

Quickly he drew his knife from his pocket, opened it on the breastwork of the parapet, and ripped open the sleeve. There was a small hole where the bullet had entered. On the other side there was no hole. The bullet had lodged in the bone. It must have fractured it. He bent the arm below the wound. The arm bent back easily. He ground his teeth to overcome the pain.

Then, taking out his field dressing, he ripped open the packet with his knife. He broke the neck of the iodine bottle and let the bitter fluid drip into the wound. A paroxysm of pain swept through him. He placed the cotton wadding over the wound and wrapped the dressing over it. He tied the end with his teeth. Then he lay still against the parapet, and closing his eyes, he made an effort of will to overcome the pain.

In the street beneath all was still. The armored car had retired speedily over the bridge, with the machine gunner's head hanging lifeless over the turret. The woman's corpse lay still in the gutter.

The sniper lay for a long time nursing his wounded arm and planning escape. Morning must not find him wounded on the roof. The enemy on the opposite roof covered his escape. He must kill that enemy, and he could not use his rifle. He had only a revolver to do it. Then he thought of a plan.

Taking off his cap, he placed it over the muzzle of his rifle. Then he pushed the rifle slowly upwards over the parapet until the cap was visible from the opposite side of the street. Almost immediately there was a report, and a bullet pierced the center of the cap. The sniper slanted the rifle forward. The cap slipped down into the street. Then, catching the rifle in the middle, the sniper dropped his left hand over the roof and let it hang, lifelessly. After a few moments he let the rifle drop to the street. Then he sank to the roof, dragging his hand with him.

Crawling quickly to the left, he peered up at the corner of the roof. His ruse[1] had succeeded. The other sniper, seeing the cap and rifle fall, thought that he had killed his man. He was now standing before a row of chimney pots, looking across, with his head clearly silhouetted against the western sky.

The Republican sniper smiled and lifted his revolver above the edge of the parapet. The distance was about fifty yards—a hard shot in the dim light—and his right arm was paining him like a thousand devils. He took a steady aim. His hand trembled with eagerness. Pressing his lips together, he took a deep breath through his nostrils and fired. He was almost deafened with the report, and his arm shook with the recoil.

Then, when the smoke cleared, he peered across and uttered a cry of joy. His enemy had been hit. He was reeling over the parapet in his death agony. He struggled to keep his feet, but he was slowly falling forward as if in a dream. The rifle fell from his grasp, hit the parapet, fell over, bounded off the pole of a barber's shop beneath, and then cluttered onto the pavement.

Then the dying man on the roof crumpled up and fell forward. The body turned over and over in space and hit the ground with a dull thud. Then it lay still.

The sniper looked at his enemy falling, and he shuddered. The lust of battle died in him. He became bitten by remorse. The sweat stood out in beads on his forehead. Weakened by his wound and the long summer day of fasting and watching on the roof, he revolted from the sight of the shattered mass of his dead enemy. His teeth chattered. He began to gibber to himself, cursing the war, cursing himself, cursing everybody.

He looked at the smoking revolver in

his hand, and with an oath he hurled it to the roof at his feet. The revolver went off with the concussion, and the bullet whizzed past the sniper's head. He was frightened back to his senses by the shock. His nerves steadied. The cloud of fear scattered from his mind, and he laughed.

Taking the whiskey flask from his pocket, he emptied it at a draught. He felt reckless under the influence of the spirits. He decided to leave the roof and look for his company commander to report. Everywhere around was quiet. There was not much danger in going through the streets. He picked up his revolver and put it in his pocket. Then he crawled down through the skylight to the house underneath.

When the sniper reached the laneway on the street level, he felt a sudden curiosity as to the identity of the enemy sniper whom he had killed. He decided that he was a good shot whoever he was. He wondered if he knew him. Perhaps he had been in his own company before the split in the army. He decided to risk going over to have a look at him. He peered around the corner into O'Connell Street. In the upper part of the street there was heavy firing, but around here all was quiet.

The sniper darted across the street. A machine gun tore up the ground around him with a hail of bullets, but he escaped. He threw himself face downwards beside the corpse. The machine gun stopped.

Then the sniper turned over the dead body and looked into his brother's face. (176-178)

[1] **RUSE:** action meant to confuse or mislead.

Liam O'Flaherty (1896-?) The Irish author Liam O'Flaherty was born in the Aran Islands, tiny windswept points of land off the west coast, where fishermen and farmers struggle against the violence of nature and still speak the ancient language of their ancestors. His first language was Gaelic (Irish), not English. Leaving college to enlist in the British army during World War 1, O'Flaherty was seriously injured in action. After his discharge he knocked about the world, working for a while in the United States as a Western Union messenger, factory hand, and fisherman. O'Flaherty was in Ireland during part of the political upheaval of the early 1920's. *The Informer*, his best-known novel, is set in Dublin during the same period as "The Sniper." (697)

For Discussion

- What details from the setting of this story make it plausible that the sniper could shoot his own brother without intending to?

- The *theme*, or meaning of a story, must apply not only to the particular events of a story, but to life in general. What meaning does "brother" have besides "male child of the same parents"? Using this larger definition, what do you think is the theme of "The Sniper"?

- What do the sniper's actions reveal about the kind of person he is? What does his attitude about war seem to be? What causes him to reverse that attitude momentarily?

For Composition

What do you think is the sniper's reaction to the discovery that he had killed his brother? Write your answer either in the form of a *postlude* (a continuation of the story, like another chapter) or a *postscript* (an explanation added to the end of the story). Be sure to indicate whether there is any change in his feelings about war and killing.

"The Sniper" – Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions. The questions may help you think about the ideas you might want to use in further discussion or in an essay.

1. The total number of deaths in this short story is

   a. one
   b. two
   c. three
   d. four

2. Considering the Republican sniper's injury, what is the meaning of the vocabulary word in the sentence: "A paroxism of pain swept through him"?

   a. a spasm or wave
   b. a thought or idea
   c. an impulse
   d. a throb

3. The fact that an "old woman, her head covered by a tattered shawl," was killed in the war is

   a. representative of a female casualty of war
   b. just punishment for being an informant during a war
   c. symbolic of the many civilians who get killed in war
   d. simply inserted to provide "local color"

4. The Free State sniper and the Republican sniper were pitted against each other in civil war. What was the personal battle for each soldier?

   a. a battle of skill
   b. a battle of intellect
   c. a battle of endurance
   d. all of the above

5. "The lust of battle died in him. He became bitten be remorse . . . he revolted from the sight of the shattered mass of his dead enemy." Explain these phrases, please.

   a. He was utterly exhausted and hungry and longed to go home.
   b. He was not in his right mind and was delusional because of the intense pain.
   c. He felt disgusted and guilty from all of the senseless killing.
   d. He was angry with himself for placing himself in this precarious position.

6. Why are the snipers not given names?

   a. Names are seldom given for trained or hired assassins.
   b. They are simply unimportant soldiers fighting in a war.
   c. They are insignificant toys in the game of war.
   d. They represent anyone who kills or gets killed in a war.

7. What is the major literary technique employed in the short story "The Sniper"?

a. onomatopoeia
b. allusion
c. personification
d. irony

8. Liam O'Flaherty's concluding sentence is "Then the sniper turned over the dead body and looked into his brother's face." Whom does the "brother" symbolize?

a. his actual familial brother
b. his fellow countryman
c. his brother in mankind
d. all of the above

9. The immediate conflict of O'Flaherty's story is

a. man vs. man
b. man vs. society
c. man vs. himself
d. man vs. nature

10. The universal and underlying conflict of O'Flaherty's story is

a. man vs. man
b. man vs. society
c. man vs. himself
d. man vs. nature

From the Novel *The Things They Carried*

Tim O'Brien

They carried USO stationery and pencils and pens. They carried Sterno, safety pins, trip flares, signal flares, spools of wire, razor blades, chewing tobacco, statuettes of the smiling Buddha, candles, grease pencils, *The Stars and Stripes*, fingernail clippers, bush hats, bolos, and much more. Twice a week, when the resupply choppers came in, they carried hot chow in green mermite cans and large canvas bags filled with iced beer and soda pop. They carried plastic water containers, each with a two-gallon capacity. Mitchell Sanders carried a set of starched tiger fatigues for special occasions. Henry Dobbins carried Black Flag insecticide. Dave Jensen carried empty sandbags that could be filled at night for added protection. Lee Strunk carried tanning lotion. Some things they carried in common. Taking turns, they carried the big PRC-77 scrambler radio which weighed 30 pounds with its battery. They shared the weight of memory. They took up what others could no longer bear. Often, they carried each other, the wounded or weak. They carried infections. They carried chess sets, basketballs, Vietnamese-English dictionaries, insignia of rank, Bronze Stars and Purple Hearts, plastic cards imprinted with the Code of Conduct. They carried diseases, among them malaria and dysentery. They carried lice and ringworm and leeches and paddy algae and various rots and molds. They carried the land itself -- Vietnam, the place, the soil... dust that covered their boots and fatigues and faces. They carried the sky. . . the stink of fungus, and decay, all of it, they carried gravity.

Tim O'Brien (1946 -) Tim O'Brien is from small town Minnesota. He was born October 1, 1946, a birth date he shares with several of his characters, and grew up in Worthington, "Turkey Capital of the World." He matriculated at Macalester College. Graduation in 1968 found him with a BA in political science and a draft notice. O'Brien was against the war, but reported for service and was sent to Vietnam with the Americal division, which has been called "unlucky" die to its involvement in the My Lai massacre in 1968, an event which figures prominently in *In the Lake of the Woods*. He was assigned to 3rd Platoon, A Co., 5th Batt. 46th Inf., as an infantry soldier. O'Brien's tour of duty was 1969-70. After Vietnam he became a graduate student at Harvard. No doubt he was one of very few Vietnam veterans there at that time, much less Combat Infantry Badge (CBI) holders. Having the opportunity to do an internship at the Washington Post, he eventually left Harvard to become a newspaper reporter. O'Brien's career as a reporter gave way to his fiction writing after publication of his memoir *If I Die in a Combat Zone, Box Me Up and Send Me Home*. He received the National Book Award for his novel, *Going After Cacciato*. [Internet Source]

from *The Things They Carried* - Questions for Analysis

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions. The questions may help you think about ideas you might want to use in further discussions or in an essay.

1. Throughout from *The Things They Carried*, "they" refers to

   a. soldiers
   b. trains
   c. civilians
   d. ambulances

2. The variety of items the men carried reflects their desire to

   a. make friends
   b. bribe villagers
   c. sell products
   d. maintain morale

3. The repetition of the expression "they carried" helps establish a feeling of

   a. relentlessness
   b. monotony
   c. suspense
   d. disappointment

4. The word "gravity" is used to mean

   a. earthly delights
   b. fond memories
   c. weighty matters
   d. unexplained forces

5. The organization of this passage is characterized by a movement from

   a. literal to figurative
   b. past to present
   c. emotion to reason
   d. far to near

6. The major conflict of this Viet Nam War excerpt is

   a. man vs. himself
   b. man vs. man
   c. man vs. society
   d. man vs. nature

Teacher Answer Key for Poetry and Prose Collection

From: "After the Apocalypse"

1. a 2. b 3. d 4. d 5. a 6. b 7. b 8. c 9. a 10. a 11. b 12. c

"Armistice Day"

1. c 2. a 3. d 4. d 5. c 6. d 7. d

"At the Onset of the Day"

1. b 2. c 3. b 4. c 5. a 6. d 7. c 8. d 9. b 10. a 11. d 12. d

"Aunt Latifa"

1. b 2. c 3. c 4. a 5. c 6. d 7. d 8. b 9. b 10. d 11. d 12. b

13. d 14. d 15. d 16. d 17. b

"Exposure"

1. b 2. a 3. d 4. b 5. c 6. c 7. b 8. b

"In Loving Memory of Khubayb"

1. a 2. d 3. c 4. c 5. b 6. d

"The Martyr"

1. c 2. b 3. d 4. a 5. d

"The Medal"

1. b 2. a 3. c 4. d

"A Meeting of Veterans of the Palmach in 1978 in Maayan Harod"

1. a 2. d 3. b 4. d 5. a 6. c 7. b 8. d

"The Next War"

1. a 2. c 3. d 4. d 5. b 6. d 7. c

Teacher Answer Key (continued)

"A Paper Soldier"

1. b 2. d 3. d 4. d

"The Sapling of Peace"

1. b 2. c 3. d 4. b 5. a

"Secrets"

1. d 2. c 3. a 4. d 5. b 6. c 7. d 8. a 9. b 10. a

"The Seed"

1. b 2. c 3. d 4. b 5. a 6. d 7. c

"Since Then"

1. a 2. b 3. c 4. c 5. b 6. b 7. a 8. d

"The Sniper"

1. c 2. a 3. c 4. d 5. c 6. d 7. d 8. d 9. a 10. b

From: *Things They Carried*

1. a 2. d 3. a 4. c 5. a 6. a

"This Cursed War"

1. d 2. d 3. b 4. b 5. c 6. a

Discussion Questions after Thematic Approach to

Middle-East Versus West

On the Similarities and Disparities of War

Is there a difference in the nature of the conflicts? Are the motives for war more physical, emotional, spiritual, environmental, etc.?

What is the difference in the resulting effects of the war (on soldier, on veteran, on family, on children, on homeland, on environment, on religious background, on peaceful negotiations)?

Is there a difference in the tone of the author between Middle-Eastern versus Western war literature, both prose and poetry?

Is there a noticeable difference between wars fought in the homeland and wars fought abroad?

Is there a particular literary element or technique that the author employs that signals whether the author is from the Middle East or from the West?

Which country/countries have heavily symbolic elements in their literature?

Which country/countries have significant allusions to various aspects of religion?

Is there a difference within the Middle-Eastern countries' literature: Egyptian, Israeli, Palestinian?

Is there a difference within the Western literature: Civil War, World War I, World War II, Viet Nam?

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